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# GRIEG
# AND
# HIS MUSIC

H. T. FINCK

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# GRIEG AND HIS MUSIC

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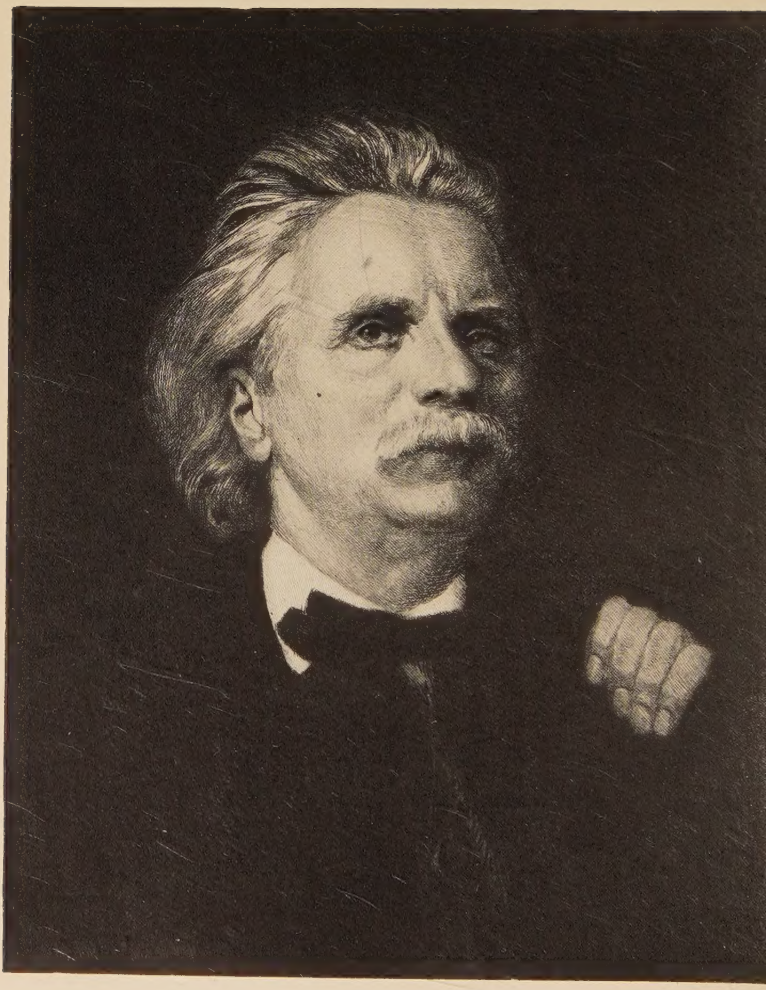

PORTRAIT OF GRIEG
By William Peters
Etched from Life in Christiania, 1903, and exhibited in the Paris Salon of that year.

# GRIEG AND HIS MUSIC

BY

HENRY T. FINCK

*Author of "Songs and Song Writers" "Wagner and his Works," etc.*

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To

EDWARD MACDOWELL

AMERICA'S MOST ORIGINAL
COMPOSER

WHO WAS MORE INFLUENCED BY EDVARD GRIEG
THAN BY ANY OTHER MASTER AND WHOSE
LAST INTELLECTUAL PLEASURE WAS THE
READING OF THE STORY OF
GRIEG'S LIFE IN THE FIRST
EDITION OF THIS BOOK

68291

## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

"Grieg is recognised far beyond his native country as one of the few masters who have enriched music with new means of melodic and harmonic expression, and created a national art distinguished by poetic feeling and the charm of many moods." — *Georg Capellen.*

"He has brought it about that Norwegian moods and Norwegian life have entered into every music-room in the whole world." — *Björnson.*

"Grieg's revolt against German classicism was the healthy instinct of a man who has a message to deliver, and seeks for it the most natural means of expression." — *Dr. Wm. Mason.*

"The North is most assuredly entitled to a language of its own." — *Robert Schumann.*

"Persevere; I tell you, you have the gifts, and — do not let them intimidate you!" — *Liszt to Grieg.*

"A tone-poet is above all things a romanticist, who, however, if he develops into a genius, may also become a classic, like Chopin. Among the younger tone-poets I include Grieg." — *Hans von Bülow.*

"Grieg is a true poet, and has added another string to our lyre." — *Professor F. Niecks.*

"What charm, what inimitable and rich musical imagery! What warmth and passion in his melodic phrases, what teeming vitality in his harmony, what originality and beauty in the turn of his piquant and ingenious modulations and rhythms, and in all the rest what interest, novelty, and independence." — *Tchaikovsky.*

"There are poets who, classed in their own period as 'minor' or dismissed as 'quaint,' are now seen at ease in the main chamber of the Muses' temple. . . . Grieg's voice is one of such individual tenderness, and, at the same time, of such berserker virility, that posterity will recognize it, listen, and applaud." — *Philip Hale.*

"When I had revelled in the music of Chopin and Wagner, Liszt and Franz, to the point of intoxication, I fancied that the last word had been said in harmony and melody; when, lo! I came across the songs and pianoforte pieces of Grieg, and once more found myself moved to tears of delight." — *H. T. F.*

# CONTENTS


PAGE

BIRD'S EYE VIEW . . . . . iv

INTRODUCTION, WITH LETTERS FROM GRIEG . . ix

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY AND CHILDHOOD — OLE BULL . . . . 1

CHAPTER II

AT THE LEIPSIC CONSERVATORY — GADE . . . . 19

CHAPTER III

FROM GERMANY TO NORWAY . . . . . 33

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIANIA — MARRIAGE — LISZT . . . . . 41

CHAPTER V

IBSEN AND "PEER GYNT" . . . . . 59

CHAPTER VI

GRIEG AT HOME — PERSONAL TRAITS — ANECDOTES . 67

CHAPTER VII

CONDUCTOR AND PIANIST — DREYFUS INCIDENT — NINA GRIEG . . . . . 98

CHAPTER VIII

NORWEGIAN FOLK-MUSIC — GRIEG'S ORIGINALITY . 116

CHAPTER IX

LAST YEARS, DEATH, AND FUNERAL . . . . 144

CHAPTER X

PAGE

Orchestral and Chamber Music . . . . . 166

CHAPTER XI

Compositions for Pianoforte . . . . . 204

CHAPTER XII

Grieg's Rank as a Composer . . . . . 225

CHAPTER XIII

Vocal Compositions . . . . . 246

CHAPTER XIV

Grieg's Artistic Creed — Patriotism and Religion 271

CHAPTER XV

Grieg and his Friend Beyer . . . . . 290

Bibliography . . . . . 304

Edvard Grieg's Works . . . . . 308

Index . . . . . 313

# ILLUSTRATIONS


| | TO FACE PAGE |
|---|---|
| Edvard Grieg. By William Peters . . *Frontispiece* | |
| Facsimile of an Invitation (Post-card) . . . . . | xviii |
| The Laatefoss; The Närodal . . . . . | 4 |
| Grieg as a Boy of Fifteen . . . . . | 12 |
| Grieg and Svendsen . . . . . | 38 |
| Mr. and Mrs. Grieg and Mr. and Mrs. Björnson . . | 46 |
| A Group of Distinguished Scandinavians . . . . . | 60 |
| Where Grieg Wrote "Peer Gynt" . . . . . | 64 |
| National Theatre, Christiania . . . . . | 66 |
| Peasants moving Grieg's Music-House . . . . . | 68 |
| Peasants Listening to Grieg's Music . . . . . | 70 |
| Grieg Walking to his Music-House . . . . . | 72 |
| A Room in Grieg's House at Troldhaugen . . . . | 74 |
| Two Views of Grieg's House at Troldhaugen . . . | 76 |
| Villa Troldhaugen and Grieg's Studio . . . . . | 78 |
| Troldhaugen . . . . . | 80 |
| Grieg Fishing on the Hardanger Fjord . . . . . | 92 |
| Mr. and Mrs. Grieg, London, 1888 . . . . . | 100 |
| Edvard Grieg . . . . . | 114 |
| A Hardanger Wedding; Odda, Hardanger Fjord . . | 118 |
| Grieg's Sixtieth Birthday . . . . . | 144 |
| Björnson and Grieg at Villa Troldhaugen . . . . | 148 |
| Edvard Grieg, May, 1904 . . . . . | 150 |
| Mr. Grieg, Mrs. Grieg, Percy Grainger, Röntgen . | 158 |
| Last Photograph of Grieg . . . . . | 160 |
| Grieg on his Deathbed . . . . . | 162 |
| Grieg's Tomb . . . . . | 164 |
| Grieg and De Greef, the Belgian Pianist . . . . | 206 |
| Facsimile of Grieg's Song, "A Swan" . . . . . | 262 |
| Facsimile of a Note about Paderewski . . . . . | 282 |
| Two Pictures of Grieg and Beyer . . . . . | 294 |

# INTRODUCTION, WITH LETTERS FROM GRIEG

IN 1899 Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons asked me to contribute a volume on violinists and violin music to their Music Lovers' Library. I replied that I would rather prepare one on songs and song-writers, not merely because the subject interested me more, but because, strange to say, there existed no book on that important branch of music in English, or, in fact, in any language. They promptly assented, and I began to collect my material. When I came to one of my favourites, Edvard Grieg, I was unable to find any facts relating to his songs, so I wrote to Bergen asking if he would not kindly give to the world, in my book, some information concerning their origin, such as we possess regarding many of those of Schubert, Schumann, Franz, and other composers. At the same time I sent him a copy of the German translation of my Wagner biography.

His reply, dated Copenhagen, February 23, 1900, was as follows: "Accept my best thanks for the kind gift of your book on Wagner. As a matter of course,

your name as that of an excellent writer on music had been familiar to me for many years. In addition to this, I had, before my article on Mozart was printed, a very special reason to be grateful to you, because you prevented the appearance in it of an erroneous assertion on my part regarding Wagner.[1]

"Some time ago a new method of carrying out contracts was introduced in America, in consequence of which my works are reprinted there in a way which affects me grievously. The thought of becoming popular in America therefore has for me, as you see, exclusively an ideal charm. But in order to give expression to the feeling of gratitude which, as just stated, I entertain toward you, I take great pleasure in meeting your wishes to the best of my powers. Now, however, comes a 'but.' I read very little about music — my poor health makes the greatest possible concentration imperative — and of the things written about me most of those I have seen were quite too stupid and ignorant to be of any use. Consequently, I regret that there is nothing of this nature that I could recommend to you. . . . I am very glad, indeed, to have my faults and weaknesses censured if I can only detect at the

[1] In the *Century Magazine*. I had been asked by the editor to translate Grieg's article from the German, and had suggested the omission of the error referred to by Grieg.

same time some comprehension of my intentions. Wagner says somewhere that one must feel sympathy with him in order to understand him. I have often thought this over and asked myself if Wagner does not here invert cause and effect. Well, however that may be, I shall be glad to make some jottings for you regarding my songs. The matter seems, however, *intime* and I feel sure I may take it for granted that what I have to say will be used with the greatest circumspection and friendly tact (*Pietät*). I regret to say that at present I am too busy to be able to promise that my notes will reach you as early as the end of April. I shall do the utmost — that I can promise you. It will be a pleasure for me to do anything that will help along your work.

"America I shall probably never visit. I cannot endure the sea voyage, nor perhaps the climate. The many invitations to give concerts in America, some of which are very tempting, I am therefore obliged to decline without hesitation.

"Should you actually come to Norway this summer, I would be very happy to meet you and your wife."

The next letter is dated Copenhagen, April 13: "I wanted to write to you, but fell ill seriously of

influenza and am far from well now, which, I regret very much to say, has prevented me to this day from writing anything about my songs, and very probably will continue to prevent me. For some weeks I am not permitted to do any mental work, and late in April I have some concerts to conduct in Christiania. Not till the middle of May shall I be back in my home near Bergen. But that would leave me only eight days for the work, if it is to be in your hands by the middle of June. It is too bad. Now comes another thing, I have read Waldmann's Conversations with Franz [to which I had called his attention] and have become quite perplexed. For, that sort of thing I cannot do. I am simply sorry that I read the book. Even a master of song like Franz ought not to talk about Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn as he has done, and especially about his own points of superiority to these masters. If he was not privileged to see that Schubert and Schumann possessed much greater powers of imagination than he did, then he will appear in my eyes — I regret to say this — somewhat less great than heretofore. His horizon must have been limited. How great were Liszt and Schumann for the very reason that, beside their other *geniale* qualities, they also

possessed a wide horizon, purified chemically, as it were, from all one-sidedness and overestimation of self. All that is great is great! That is and remains my motto! However, I am going astray — it is due to the influenza-affected head! I am very sorry you are not coming to Europe this summer. You might then have played the rôle of Waldmann so nicely — better, in any case, than he did!

"To sum up: I cannot at this moment make you a promise. But should circumstance permit my doing something to meet your wishes, I shall certainly do it."

In a postscript he adds: "I almost forgot to tell you that I entertain the greatest respect and sympathy for your book on Wagner, not only because it is planned and executed in a masterly way, but because it is written with a rare freedom from bias. You are, like myself, one of the greatest admirers of the incomparable master, but not one of the Wagnerites! In my opinion this rabble constitutes his worst enemies!"

Three months later I was surprised and delighted to get from him a letter of thirty-six pages, dated Troldhaugen, July 17, and containing an abundance of most interesting facts regarding his

songs and certain episodes in his life. He concluded by saying: "I have, as you see, made the same reflections as those which have found such remarkably eloquent expression in the chapter on singers and songstresses in your excellent work on Wagner. Why should I hesitate — and particularly in this instance where my communication is made with the object of revealing to you the secret source of my songs. And yet I would never have dared to do this had not your Wagner book filled me with absolute artistic faith in you. This *Privatmonolog* may tell you as much as is essential for an estimate of my songs. Much more might be said: but I feel a disinclination to say more.

"In sending you these notes as a source of information to be used by you, I do it under these express assumptions: (1) that you return them at once after making use of them. (2) That you take *only* what you need for your purposes; in other words, that you avoid as much as possible to use my own words, and never cite me as the speaker. (3) That, as I take for granted in the case of an author of your position, my communications are to be regarded as being of an entirely confidential nature, especially where they are obviously of a subjective nature. (4) That you will

send me, in accordance with your promise, a copy of the pages relating to me in your manuscript or the proof-sheets, for my inspection.

"Pardon me if I am occasionally too diffuse. It is sometimes difficult to know where to stop. Above all things I beg you to excuse my bad German. In the use of *der*, *die*, *das* I am always a bungler.[1] That I look forward to your book most eagerly I need hardly add. You have undertaken a task which hitherto has not been solved. But to a man who has written about Wagner with such deep comprehension as you have shown, one may say what Liszt said to me at Rome in 1870: 'You have just the qualities called for.'"

It is easy to imagine the eagerness with which I read these thirty-six pages of autobiography addressed to me. I selected the brightest nuggets for my chapter on his songs (subsequently borrowing many of them for the present volume), and in doing so I could not resist the temptation to quote his own words here and there, regardless of the second of his four conditions. On September 24 he wrote to me:

"I have just received the proof-sheets, and hasten

[1] All of Grieg's letters to me were written in German — good, idiomatic German, with only an occasional slight error.

to return them. I need not tell you how I rejoice at your sympathy and your comprehension of my art. Hitherto I have always been, as regards critics, a great pessimist. Always these gentlemen have pointed out my least important things as my best, and unfortunately also *vice versa*. How happy I am that this is not the case with you. You have in the main dwelt on the very songs which I myself consider the best.

"Now, however, comes a big 'But.' You have, after all, cited my own words and very often, in fact, where it was not necessary. That must be avoided, and I have, as you see, indicated the way of doing so. I beg you urgently to carry out the changes I have marked with ordinary lead pencil (not blue pencil). Only in a few places have I left myself as the speaker."

The same letter contains a few paragraphs about Gade, Ibsen, and Scandinavian composers which I reserve for later pages in this volume. On the twenty-first of December he wrote again, from Christiania:

"If I had a catalogue of my books, your volume on song writers would be marked with two stars. Higher praise I could not utter. And yet: everything in this world has its faults. I confess that

your judgment of Brahms was a great disappointment to me. That you, with your great, wide horizon, have failed to discover the real Brahms, is really quite too extraordinary, and shows how the most many-sided men have their limitations. For me there is no doubt concerning Brahms. A landscape, torn by mists and clouds, in which I can see ruins of old churches, as well as of Greek temples — that is Brahms. The necessity of placing him by the side of Bach and Beethoven is as incomprehensible to me as the attempt to reduce him *ad absurdum*. The great must be great, and a comparison with other great ones must always be unsatisfactory.

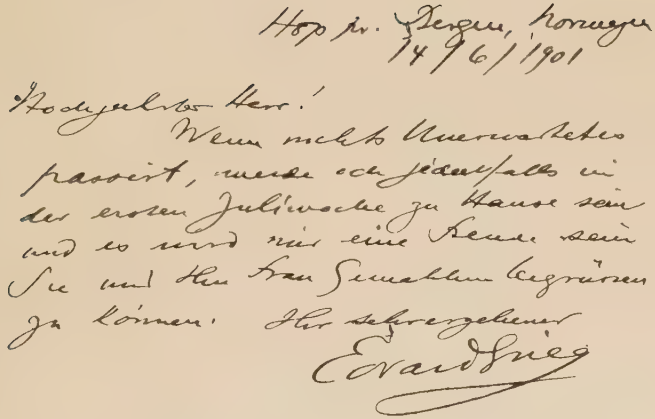
"That you have not only sympathy with my art, but a deep comprehension of it, is a real boon for my heart. Believe me I have hitherto nearly always fared badly with the so-called critics. Where there was sympathy there was no comprehension, and for so-called comprehension without sympathy I do not give a penny. As for America, I doubt if I shall ever see it. But I hope you will soon come to Norway so we can shake hands.

"For reviews of your book in the local papers I regret that no copies can be obtained here. Allow me to suggest that a copy be sent to our leading

liberal paper, *Verdens Gang* (Course of the World), of which the editor is Mr. O. Thomassen."

In July, 1901, I had the pleasure of paying the Griegs a visit at Troldhaugen, which is described in Chapter VI of the present volume. In the following year the Oliver Ditson Company asked me to make a selection of Grieg's best fifty songs and edit it for their Musicians' Library. I replied that I would gladly do so on condition that a royalty be paid to Grieg on every copy sold. Although the absence of a copyright agreement between the United States and Norway made it a legal act to reprint Scandinavian music, the Boston publishers promptly acceded to this request and furthermore asked me to offer Grieg in their name $1,000 for a dozen new songs and piano pieces. His answer, dated September 30, 1902, follows:

"I was glad to see your handwriting again. And I was egoistic enough to hope that you were going to write me this time about Seidl's orchestration of the 'Bell-ringing.' Instead of that, it was something quite unexpected. It is indeed most kind of you to take my part in America, and that, too, in a purely business matter. I am, as you quite correctly say, not a millionaire. But I am not so poorly off as to be willing to take money from


Hop pr. Bergen, Norwegen
14/6/1901

Hochgeehrter Herr!

Wenn nichts Unerwartetes passirt, werde ich jedenfalls in der ersten Juliwoche zu Hause sein und es wird mir eine Freude sein Sie und Ihre Frau Gemahlin begrüssen zu können. Ihr sehr ergebener

Edvard Grieg

FACSIMILE OF AN INVITATION (POST CARD)

American publishers who are inclined to reprint my works. Moreover, my relations to the Peters firm are such that for this reason alone I cannot entertain the offer made by Mr. Ditson. It will be different if Mr. Ditson makes an arrangement with Peters. Then it would perhaps be possible to have my works appear legitimately in America too. But if he is not willing to do this, things will have to remain as they are: the smart Messrs. Pirates reprint and enrich themselves without considering the composer. Well, I am glad at any rate that an American edition, if it cannot be avoided, is to be placed in your hands.

"It is possible that, as an American, you will not find my standpoint 'smart' enough. As a German, however (and especially as a German *idealist*), you will, I feel sure, agree with me.

"If I really told you that I was not composing any more, this must not be taken literally. Last Christmas there appeared the tenth volume of Lyric Pieces. Soon all the ten parts will be published in a sumptuous volume by Peters.

"Accept once more my best thanks for your kind intentions. With hearty greeting from house to house, Your most devoted Edvard Grieg."

His loyalty to his German publisher is illustrated

in another letter, dated January 16, 1903, in which he says:

"I told you [at Troldhaugen] what is a well-known fact, that C. F. Peters at one time reprinted pieces not protected by copyright, among them my own. But very many years ago Peters made an arrangement with the original publisher of these works by which he acquired all rights, except for Scandinavia. I should like to see the royalties offered me by an American publisher! Should such a thing come to pass, I shall promptly inform C. F. Peters. The only correct thing would be a direct arrangement with Peters, without whose agreement I would in no case accept a royalty. You may think this is foolish. But I happen to be so foolish."

A deep and sad insight into Grieg's life is given in a letter he wrote me in reply to one in which I had informed him that I had been asked to write a book of 20,000 words on his life and works by John Lane for the series of Living Masters of Music, and begged him to assist me with any material he could call my attention to or place at my disposal temporarily. His answer is dated Copenhagen, May 2, 1905:

"I would have written you long ago to thank

you for the excellent photographs of yourself and your wife. (What a pity I cannot show yours to any one because of the extravagant words on my art which you wrote on it.) What prevented me from writing was — illness and always illness. Hardly had I arrived here toward the end of December when I was confined to my bed (influenza, bronchitis, asthma), and I have not recovered. More recently a complicated stomach trouble was superadded which brought on such complete prostration that I am good for nothing, unable either to write or to make music. Even the writing of this letter is a colossal effort for me. I am much grieved to be obliged to tell you that for this reason with the best intentions I cannot comply with your wishes. In connection with this I must tell you that a German publisher has offered me a brilliant honorarium for an autobiography, a work which, for the reasons just given, I have not begun, nor am likely to begin for some time and probably never will begin.

"But now arises the question: In what way can I be of use to you in your task? How gladly I would help! Unfortunately, since the days of my youth I have saved hardly any of the articles written about my works, my concerts, etc. I cannot,

therefore, refer you to the periodicals containing them. The article on me in the so-called 'Scandinavian' number of *Die Musik* is by reason of its lack of understanding and its superficiality sheer nonsense. Its author contents himself with designating me as a 'Kleinkünstler' (miniature artist) and acts as if I had written only short things, although he ought to know that as a matter of fact I owe my name to my larger works. It is unheard of that a serious periodical not only is so unjust but in addition indulges in cheap witticisms like this, that I 'never reached the ocean but stuck in the fjord.'

"I shall inform Peters that you intend to apply to him, and shall ask him to send you the necessary material. The few things that I possess are in my villa 'Troldhaugen' near Bergen, which I shall probably not reach till the beginning of June. A few years ago there appeared here in Copenhagen a book on me in the Norwegian language written by the Norwegian composer Gerhard Schjelderup. He asked me for contributions to his book but I had to refuse them firmly. The book consequently contains many erroneous details. The author was compelled, too, to prepare it for the publisher in a short time. Yet it is written by a sympathetic

and genuine artist hand, and while I do not agree with all of the author's views, his book contains much that must be of interest for your purposes. Perhaps you can also use the illustrations. The letter to my parents relating to Liszt (of the year 1870 from Rome), which was printed in 1892 at Bergen, in a festival book issued on the occasion of my silver wedding, will also interest you. A translator you will easily find in New York. I shall do my best to-morrow to get a copy and will send it to you at once.[1] Whatever I can find in Troldhaugen I will send you from there as soon as possible. Pardon me, however, if I unfortunately cannot comply with your request that I should send my photographs direct to Mr. Lane. Such things I avoid as a matter of principle. In fact I have for many years refused without exception all requests for biographic material and photographs from persons unknown to me and especially from publishers. I simply have neither time nor desire for this. And in the latest years the wan thing, illness, has been added. I shall, however, make an exception from this philistine 'without exception' in favour of the esteemed and excellent

[1] He did so, after writing in it a number of marginal comments and further details which were of much use to me.

author of the book on Wagner and 'Songs and Song-Writers,' out of gratitude for his sympathetic feeling for my art, and shall gladly send you what I have when I get home.

"But now I am done! Completely exhausted by this exertion. The parole now is: go to sleep. I hope soon to write you more, from Troldhaugen."

Seven weeks later (June 22) he wrote again: "Hardly had I got home when I fell ill seriously and not till to-day have I been able to delve among my papers. Without result, I regret to say. Newspaper clippings of value there are none. Those of my early days are too stupid, and the later ones I did not save." While he was writing these words his wife was still hunting for photographs: "At this moment," he says, "my wife has found some interesting pictures." The rest of this four-page letter is devoted chiefly to remarks about the pictures he is about to send me and to references to a few reliable sources of information, notably Almar Grönvold's book and Holter's article in Salmonsen's Konversationslexicon, which, he says "is written in many respects with intelligence."

Three months later, from Christiania (September 29): "I feel very guilty! But it was quite impossible for me to answer your two letters at once.

Then came another journey, followed by the political excitement, which still continues. In short, I must beg your pardon." I had told him that I had suggested to Mr. Lane that the medallion to be stamped on the cover of my book should represent the Norwegian flag. Regarding this, Grieg wrote: "Your idea about the Norwegian flag is, I think, a very good one. But I hope the right one has been chosen and not the old one with the Swedish colours in the corner. That would never do (*das fehlte noch*)!

"Yes, I did write articles on the Bayreuth performances in August, 1876; they appeared in the *Bergenposten*, a newspaper which does not exist any more. To-day I can only say this, that I was at the same time wildly enthusiastic and strongly inclined to criticise. The undue lengthening of some of the scenes affected me very unpleasantly; so did the dialogue, which is often fashioned too much after a theory. In other words, without being a Wagnerite, I was at that time already what I am still: an adherent, nay a worshipper, of that mighty genius.

"Apart from articles on Mozart, Schumann, and Verdi I have not written anything worth mentioning, only here and there a short paper in the

journals, which I have never gathered together. You express surprise that I endured all the stupidities of the critics so patiently instead of laying about with a club long ago. Well, had I done that, I would, in my opinion, have lost all that remained of my artistic pride. If there is in my music anything of lasting value it will live; if not, it will perish. That is my belief, for I am convinced that truth will prevail *ultimately*."

As the main object of writing my book on Grieg was not to make money, but to do missionary work for a great genius not fully understood by his contemporaries, I wrote to Björnson, asking if he would not write a few introductory words. Concerning this, Grieg wrote: "It is not probable that you will hear from Björnson. He seems to be in a bad humour, and apart from that I cannot, for obvious reasons, appeal to him personally. . . .

"Fortunately I am now getting along somewhat better here in Christiania. But creative work is still out of the question.

"If you have really succeeded in correcting the many erroneous current notions regarding my works, you will have done me and my country a great service and I shall take pleasure in thanking you therefor cordially. Unfortunately I am some-

what pessimistic; yet I am none the less cordially obliged to you for your good and artistically correct intentions."

On the eighth of October he wrote again, from Christiania:

"Yesterday I received from Mr. Lane the proof-sheets of your book, which have occupied me uninterruptedly (excepting a few intervals for my meals and sleep). In consequence of my imperfect command of the English language it was a great exertion and I have just finished the task. I admire the keen scent with which you track facts — like an expert hunter pursuing his quarry. But so far as your estimate of my works is concerned I must echo the words of our poet A. O. Vinje in his 'The Last Spring': 'More I got than I deserved — and everything must end.' There are certainly passages in which you have done yourself and me a questionable service by an excess of superlatives!? But the many truths which you did not hesitate to express bluntly have gladdened my heart.

"Somewhere in your book you express the indubitable truth that in art quality is more important than quantity. From this point of view I am much surprised that you make no mention at all of a short composition which to me is of the greatest

importance: I mean 'Der Bergentrückte,' for baritone solo, string orchestra, and two horns. The text follows some very old specimens of folklore which greatly absorbed me during my stay at Lofthus. This piece contains drops of my heart blood. Schjelderup speaks of it in his book. Apart from this I have nothing to add. The political situation takes up much of my attention.

"The compositions of mine that are about to appear in print are: op. 73, Moods, piano pieces; op. 51, Old Norwegian Romance for orchestra, and op. 54, Lyrical Suite (from the Lyrical Pieces. op. 56). . . . .

"I am of course delighted that you, who have so much sympathy with my art, were asked to write a book about me, and I am under great obligations to you because you are endeavouring to carry out your task with so much interest and carefulness. At the same time I wish, and cannot refrain from saying so, that you might have had four times as much time at your disposal, so that you might have written a complete and definitive record of my career. This wish you will easily understand.

"Those musk melons I envy you! They are my favourite food! We have them here, too, in

great abundance, moreover, and very cheap. You are wise in devoting as much time as possible to your garden. That keeps the mind fresh and preserves the love of nature!"

In a postscript he asks: "Have you seen in the *North American Review*, edited by George Harvey, September, 1902, an article by A. M. Wergeland: 'Grieg as a National Composer'? It was written by a woman who was born in Norway, and contains much that is good and true."

He refers again to the question of a medallion for the book cover in his next letter (September 4): "I greatly regret that I do not possess my complete family crest, yet I am really glad, because I do not like the idea of using that. The flag would be a thing that has special interest at this moment, and, like my music, it points directly at my nationality. Why not simply use a portrait? . . . The interview you referred to is, like all interviews, incorrect. . . .

"I hope Mr. Lane will send me a few copies of your book, and I regret that it does not appear simultaneously in a Norwegian version."

"Katholisches Hospital" — these ominous words are at the head of the last letter I received from Grieg; it is dated 30/12/5 — December 30, 1905:

"As you see, I am in a hospital because of my sins. I have had a bad time with my disordered organs of digestion and my whole nervous system. But for this, I would have written to you long ago, to express my most cordial thanks to you for your book on me. I have now read it again in as sober a mood as possible. I still must reproach you with having placed me too high. But the whole book breathes sympathy and love for my art, and you have made excellent use of the material. Of most particular importance is the chapter on the relation of Norwegian folksongs to my originality. For this I must express to you my gratitude in the highest degree. You have succeeded brilliantly in rehabilitating me in face of the many unjust and ignorant foreign criticisms.

"I was deeply grieved to read about the illness of MacDowell and have written to his wife, in your care. He may improve, of course, but whether permanently, that is the question. He is indeed the most ideal of the American composers I know of.

"Should you soon come to Norway again, as I hope you will, you will find a free, independent people. What has happened in our country this year seems like a fairy tale. The hopes and longings of my youth have been fulfilled. I am deeply

grateful that I was privileged to live to see this. And herewith the best New Year's wishes to you and your dear wife from my wife and from your gratefully devoted Edvard Grieg."

It was not only in his letters to me that Grieg protested against my superlatives. When he gave two concerts in Berlin, a few months before his death, Mr. Arthur Laser, who was translating this book into German, wrote to me: "I visited him in his hotel, where we had a very pleasant talk about music in general and about you and your book. 'Finck praises me too much,' he said." Obviously he was not familiar with the wise and witty old adage:

> Bescheidenheit ist eine Zier
> Doch weiter kommt man ohne ihr.

In English prose: "Modesty is an ornament, but one gets along better without it." Grieg would have got along better if he had been less modest and more aggressive. He should not have considered it beneath his dignity to correct the journalistic misrepresentations, such as the almost universal imputation that he had borrowed most of his melodies — the rare beauty of which was conceded — from Norwegian folksongs, when, as matter of fact, only about five per cent of them

were thus borrowed, and even these were adorned with harmonies entirely his own, though, like his own melodies, redolent of Norway.

Many of the critics who charged him with borrowing did so not from malice, but from insufficient information. I myself did not know till he told me that of his songs only one, "Solvejg's Lied," is based on a melody not of his own creation. He should have told these things publicly, should have used the cudgels occasionally; but, of course, when a man has only one lung he is not apt to be a fighter. He suffered in silence, like the equally modest Schubert, Chopin, and Franz. But I considered it my duty to destroy the absurd myths that have for decades been handed down from book to book and newspaper to newspaper, like hereditary maladies; among them this delusion that Grieg did little more than transplant to his garden the wild flowers of Norwegian folk-music — a delusion which shamefully retarded the recognition of his rare originality.

To some of the reviewers of the first edition of this book, my comments seemed "over enthusiastic." They would have appeared less so if it had been borne in mind that I dwelt only on the best of Grieg's works. I did this not merely because of

lack of space, but as a matter of principle. Had I commented on each song and on each piece there would have been a considerable amount of faint praise and some censure. But what good would that have done? The world is full of imperfect things; why waste time on them? The highest function of criticism is to call attention to works of genius, especially those that are neglected or insufficiently appreciated. This I have tried to do. I do not make any pretence to superior insight in this matter. If I am more enthusiastic over Grieg's songs and pieces than some other writers or musicians are, it is simply because I know them and they do not. I have had some surprising experiences with eminent singers whose knowledge of these songs was confined to half a dozen of the most popular ones. The most original and characteristic ones — such as the dozen contained in Volume IV of the Grieg Album (Peters edition) — they had never seen or heard.

If I am to be called uncritical because of my abounding enthusiasm for the best products of Grieg's genius, uncritical let me be called. The older I get the more I become convinced that the alleged "critical" faculty of our times is a mental disease, a species of phylloxera threatening the best

works of genius. Let us enjoy the fresh grape from which the harmless wine of musical intoxication is made, leaving the raisins to the analysts and "critical" commentators. Grieg's music is as fresh and inspiriting as on the day when it was composed; most of it is music of the future. It is only quite recently that what Mr. Huneker has so happily called the Greater Chopin has come into vogue. The day will come when the Greater Grieg also will be revealed to the public. The time is ripe for him. I cannot refrain from citing the words in which Mr. Louis C. Elson summed up his review of this volume: "In these days when much music suggests nervous maladies and the mad house, when there seems to be a fetid atmosphere hanging over the concert room and opera house, Grieg comes to the disgusted and stifling musician like a whiff of pure air, and we hope that this book will enable even some of our neurotics to view him in his true light and accord him his deserved homage."

The first edition of this book appeared in the series of Living Masters of Music, in which it could not remain, for Grieg died on September 4, 1907. The present edition contains so much added material that it is practically a new book. Grieg's

letters to me are now printed for the first time, partly in this preface, partly in the succeeding chapters where they help to tell the story of his life or throw light on his works. I have benefited by the excellent semi-official biography of Schjelderup and Neumann published by C. F. Peters, and am under great obligations for the permission given me by Julius Röntgen, Jr., to make some citations from the one hundred and ninety-nine letters written to Dr. Julius Röntgen, the famous Dutch composer and intimate friend of Grieg, which the same firm has announced for publication. My thanks are also due to Messrs. Frank van der Stucken, Edouard Colonne, Christian and Johannes Schjött, Joachim Reinhard, Gerhard Schjelderup; to Mr. Arthur Laser who, in his German translation of the first edition, made corrections and additions of which I now gladly avail myself; to Dr. William Peters, Marc A. Blumenberg, and Carl Venth for kind permission to use illustrations and photographs; and, above all, to Mr. Frants Beyer, Grieg's most intimate friend, for some of the composer's letters and an account of his last days.

# CHAPTER I

## Ancestry and Childhood — Ole Bull

IT may sound paradoxical to say that Norway owes its greatest composer to the outcome of a battle fought in the eighteenth century in Scotland, but such is the case. It was in July 1745 that the Pretender Charles Edward Stuart landed in the Scottish county of Lorne, and on April 16 of the following year his fate was decided at the battle of Culloden, a few miles east of Inverness. It was an unequal contest, in which the Scotch were foredoomed to failure. There were only six thousand of them, whereas the Duke of Cumberland had twice that number; and while the English soldiers were well trained, well fed, and headed by experienced commanders, the Highlanders were ragged, starving, exhausted, unofficered. In vain they valiantly flung themselves on the English front. Their undisciplined courage was opposed to the trained enemy's guns and bayonets and heavy charges of horse. In an hour all was over. The pretender fled with his officers, and of his

soldiers who escaped the carnage many were taken as prisoners to England, where the common men were permitted to cast lots, one in every twenty to be tried and hanged; the rest to be transported. The English were determined to subdue the spirit of the vanquished mountaineers, and in pursuit of this purpose they went so far as to prohibit the Highland garb.

In these troublous times, when everything seemed lost, many Scotchmen left their native country to seek a home elsewhere. Among these was a merchant named Alexander Greig, of Aberdeen, a city which to this day harbours families bearing that name. Like others, he chose to immigrate to Norway, which in climate and general aspect sufficiently resembled Scotland to seem an acceptable substitute for home. He established himself at Bergen, and changed his name to Grieg in order to make it correspond in Norwegian to its proper pronunciation.[1] He did not sever all connection with his native country, however. A member of the Scotch Reformed Church, he was so strong in

[1] In an autobiographic sketch of his school days Grieg says that the names of Generals Greigh and Elphinstone had been impressed on his memory deeply ever since his father had told him that his family arms, which bore a ship, denoted that his original ancestor was in all probability the Scotch Admiral Greigh.

his adherence to his faith that he made an annual trip to Scotland to partake of the communion. He married Margretha Elisabeth Heitman.

Their son, John Grieg, continued the mercantile pursuit while serving at the same time as British Consul at Bergen, which was then, as it is now, of all Norwegian cities second in importance only to the capital, Christiania. He married Maren Regine Haslund, who presented to him a son, in whom there was thus already more Norwegian than Scotch blood. This son, Alexander Grieg, who also served as British Consul, married the Norwegian Gesine Judith Hagerup, and unto them was born the hero of our book, Edvard Grieg.[1]

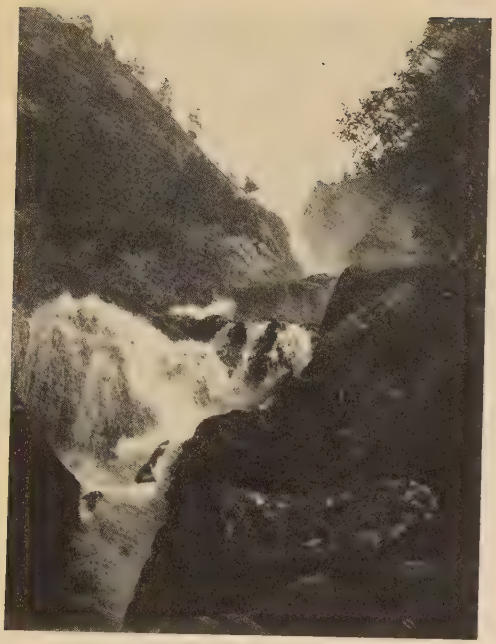
Schopenhauer's doctrine that men of genius inherit their gifts from their mothers is borne out in Edvard Grieg's case, as in so many others. His father was a man of excellent character, of intelligence and culture; but from him Edvard could have never derived his musical genius and the love of wild nature with which it is so closely associated.

[1] In cyclopædias we generally find his name given as Edvard Hagerup Grieg, but he did not sanction the middle name, and never used it in his correspondence. "It is true," he wrote to me, "that my baptismal name includes the Hagerup. My artist name, however, is simply E. G. The Hagerup which is to be found in most of the encyclopædias is derived in all probability from the archives of the Leipsic Conservatory."

The elder Grieg did manifest some interest in music; he even played the pianoforte a little, but the music he liked was not such as his son liked and wrote. When the two made a trip into the mountains together, the same difference was manifested in their love of nature. To cite Otto Schmid's obviously authentic remarks:

"Wherever the landscape presented evidence of human toil in one of those level fertile fields which are infrequent in the mountainous North, Alexander Grieg was pleased and apt to become imbued with an enthusiasm which his son, however, did not share. Where, on the other hand, nature revealed its grandeur and sublimity; where snowy solitudes, amid towering precipitous cliffs, sent their rivers of ice, their glaciers, down into the valley; where the ice-coloured streams, after devious toilsome paths, thundered as cataracts over disintegrating rocks, the father was displeased by the sternness of the scenery, the rugged charms of which did not appeal to him; whereas the son, overwhelmed by thrills of delight, was struck dumb in deep admiration."

From his mother Edvard Grieg inherited not only his Norwegianism, but his artistic taste and his musical gifts. Her pedigree has been traced back



The Laatefoss
*Photo by Carl Venth.*

The Närodal, with the Jordalsnut
*Photo by Carl Venth.*

as far as the beginning of the seventeenth century, to the famous Kjeld Stub.[1]

Oddly enough, as the subjoined genealogical table shows, this remarkable personage was born in Sweden; to say, however, that Edvard Grieg, in

[1] In the appendix to his book, "Edvard Grieg og hans Vaerker," Schjelderup prints the following genealogical table, to understand which it is necessary to know that in the old times, when towns were small, Norwegian children were named after them (or after a farm), and that names underwent further changes through *sön* (son) or *datter* (daughter) being grafted on to the father's name: "Magister Kjeld Stub, parish priest of Ullensaker, was born in Halland-Skaane, Sweden, 10/12, 1607, and died in 1663. He was married three times, the last time in 1653, to Maren Lauritzdatter Sverderup, daughter of a minister in Vang, Hedemarken (Norway); year of death, 1669. They had three children, one of whom, Gunhild Stub (who died 1717), was married to Hans Lauritzen, minister in Spydeberg. There were nineteen children, of whom Lorentze Hansdatter Spydeberg (1688–1751) was married at the age of twenty to Eiler Bertelsen Kongel, Stensvik in Kvaernaes. There were four children, one of whom was Magister Eiler Eilersen, latest Bishop in Christianssand (1718–1789). Through his mother he was related to Bishop Hagerup in Trondhjem, and at the age of twelve years he was adopted as a son and received the name Hagerup. He was married twice, the second time to Edvardine Magdalene Margrethe Christie (1755–1830), the daughter of a minister from Tysnaes, Söndhordland. Edvardine Christie was an aunt of the well-known Eisvolds-man magistrate Wilhelm Frimann Koren Christie. There were three children, one of whom was Edvard Hagerup, latest chief magistrate (*stiftsamtmand*) in Bergen (1781–1853). He always lived in Bergen, as his mother left Christianssand after his father's death; and at the age of eight Edvard Hagerup was placed in the Kathedral school in Bergen; he passed the examination in law, and was married in 1808 to Ingeborg Benedicte Janson (1786–1849), daughter of the court-agent (*hofagent*), Herman D. Janson, wholesale merchant in Bergen. There were eight children, one of whom, Gesine Judith Hagerup (1814–1875), married the English Consul at Bergen, Alexander Grieg (1806–1875). There were three daughters and two sons, including Edvard Hagerup Grieg, the composer."

view of this, and his Scotch paternal descent, was not a real Norwegian after all, would be to forget the intermarriages of two centuries and a half, which were usually with natives, and finally left the Norwegian element far preponderant.[1] Kjeld Stub appears to have been an astonishingly "strenuous" individual. He was engineer, teacher, parson, and army officer at different times, and betrayed qualities which Schjelderup thinks would, under other circumstances, have made a prominent artist of him. From him the composer may have possibly inherited his fiery temperament, his faculty for organising, and his power over the masses. The large admixture of clerical blood in Grieg's maternal pedigree is also noticeable; the word parish-parson occurs repeatedly.

Apart from Kjeld Stub, the most important of Grieg's ancestors was his grandfather Edvard Hagerup. As Stiftamtmand of Bergen, the second city in Norway, he held one of the highest positions in the country. He lived till 1853, and as little Edvard was at that time already nine years old (he was born on June 15, 1843), and had spent many a day in his ancestor's home, he remembered

[1] It must be remembered, too, that Kjeld Stub's birthplace, although now in Sweden, belonged in his time to Denmark and Norway.

him well. The Amtmand's funeral made a particularly deep impression on him, partly because of the pomp and solemnity attending it, partly because of the dirge, a funeral march composed by a Swedish Prince, Gustav, who died in his youth. This march was played by a military band, and parts of it stirred the boy so deeply that they became indelibly fixed in his memory.

Gesine Judith Hagerup was one of Edvard Hagerup's eight children (families were large in those days: Gunhild Stub had nineteen sons and daughters). She herself gave birth to three daughters and two sons; the composer Edvard, and John, who became a merchant in Bergen and who devoted his leisure moments to playing the violoncello. Most of the mother's musical talent was inherited by Edvard, and there was a good deal to inherit. Without in the least neglecting her household duties, Gesine Hagerup was able to devote much of her time to music. As a young girl she had received lessons in singing and pianoforte playing in Hamburg from Albert Methfessel, an excellent teacher and a composer of songs, some of which are still in favour. Subsequently she continued her studies in London, which she visited repeatedly with her husband, and thus she acquired

a skill which enabled her to appear as soloist at concerts in Bergen. Grieg remembered particularly her splendid performance, with orchestra and chorus, of Beethoven's great Fantasia, opus 80. He also specially recalled the remarkable verve and rhythmic animation with which she always played the works of one of her favourites, Weber.

He could not have had a better teacher than his mother, who began to give him lessons when he was six years old.[1] More important than this instruction, however, was the musical atmosphere he was enabled to breathe at home. A boy who is destined to become a great genius can easily teach himself, but nothing can atone for the lack of that musical nutriment in childhood and youth which builds the very tissues of that part of the brain which is set aside for musical impressions. Madame Grieg not only played a great deal *en famille*, but once a week she invited those of her friends who were

[1] Already a year before this he had gone on voyages of discovery. In view of his future greatness as an originator in the world of harmony, it is extremely interesting to read what he has written regarding that year; he speaks of "the wonderful mysterious satisfaction with which my arms stretched out to the piano to discover — not a melody; that was far off — no; that there is such a thing as harmony. First a third, then a chord of three notes, then a full chord of four, ending at last with both hands. — Oh, joy! a combination of five, the chord of the ninth. When I found that out my happiness knew no bounds."

fond of the art to a musical soirée. On such occasions the place of honour was usually given to Mozart and Weber, from whose operas selections were performed, the hostess playing the orchestral parts on the pianoforte, and on occasions also assuming a vocal rôle to complete the cast.[1] In a corner of the room sat a happy boy listening to this music; it was executed by amateurs only, but while amateurs may fail here and there in technical proficiency, they usually play with more zeal and enthusiasm than the average professional; and it is the zeal and enthusiasm of the player and singer that stir the listener's soul most deeply and make him eager to become a musician too.

What Edvard heard stimulated him to renewed diligence in his practice, and his mother was seldom too far away to hear and correct the errors perpetrated by his youthful fingers. She had set her mind on making him musical, and she succeeded beyond her fondest hopes. Not that it was all easy sailing at first. "Only too soon did it become clear to me," he writes, "that I had to practise just what was unpleasant. . . . There was no trifling with her if I spent the time in dreaming at

[1] Mme. Grieg also arranged private theatricals for some of these occasions; several plays of her own were found among her papers after her death, and her son remembered some of her poems.

the piano instead of busying myself with the lesson set. . . . But my unpardonable tendency to dreaming was already beginning to bring me the same difficulties which have accompanied me long enough throughout my life. Had I not inherited my mother's irrepressible energy as well as her musical capacity, I should never in any respect have succeeded in passing from dreams to deeds."

While Mozart and Weber were Mme. Grieg's favourites, she was by no means one of those amateurs who are deaf to the beauties of contemporary music. She appreciated not only the orthodox romanticist Mendelssohn, but the more radical and revolutionary Chopin, whose delightful and unique pieces were at that time understood by few, and therefore underrated. It is probable that Chopin's novel and audacious harmonies sowed the seeds from which subsequently sprang some of the loveliest flowers of Grieg's genius.

His first serious attempt to compose was made at the age of twelve or thirteen. One day he brought with him to school a music-book on which he had written: "Variations on a German Melody for the Piano, by Edvard Grieg, Opus 1." He wanted to show it to one of his classmates. Unfortunately, the teacher caught sight of it and examined

it; then he suddenly seized the boy by his hair till his eyes were black, and advised him gruffly to leave such rubbish at home. (Subsequently this Opus 1 was consigned to the flames.) The teacher had no reason to like Edvard, who had been neglecting his three "R's," and who later confessed that in school he was "just as idle as at the piano." He was ingenious in devising excuses for being late; for instance, he would stand in the rain or under a dripping roof till he was soaked through to the skin, and the teacher had to send him home. "The only excuse I will make for myself is that school-life was in the last degree unsympathetic to me; its materialism, its coarseness, its coldness, were so abhorrent to my nature that I thought of the most incredible ways of escaping from it, if only for a short time. . . . I have not the least doubt that that school developed in me nothing but what was evil, and left the good untouched." [1]

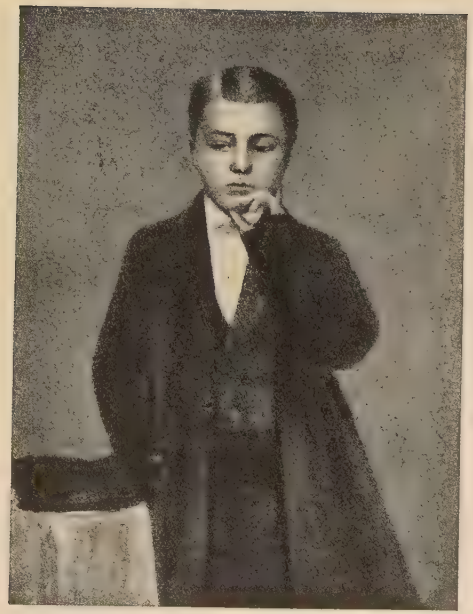
Up to this time it had never occurred to Edvard that he might become an artist. He wanted to be a pastor. To be able to preach to an interested

[1] Other amusing anecdotes and reminiscences of these school days, as well as of the three years spent at the Leipsic Conservatory, may be found in a semi-humorous sketch, "My First Success," written by Grieg and printed in Velhagen Klasing's *Monatshefte* and the *Neue Musikzeitung* (Stuttgart, 1905). A condensed English version of this may be found in the London *Contemporary Review* (July, 1905).

congregation seemed to him something very lofty. To be a prophet, a herald, that was what he liked. He had at this time also a great passion for poetry; he knew all the poems in the reading-books by heart, and declaimed them to his parents and sisters. "And when my father, after dinner, wanted to take his little *siesta* in the armchair, I would not leave him in peace, but got behind a chair, which represented my pulpit, and declaimed away without any consideration."

From Edvard's tenth year on the Grieg family had lived at the fine estate of Landaas, a few kilometres from Bergen. One summer's day, when he was nearly fifteen years old, a rider at full gallop came up the road to Landaas. It was one of the idols of Grieg's dreams, Ole Bull. Something like an electric current seemed to pass through the boy when the world-famed violinist shook his hand: yet he was disenchanted to find one whom he regarded almost as a god smiling and joking just like ordinary mortals. He listened speechless to the astounding stories of his journeys in America.

Inasmuch as Ole Bull on more than one occasion exerted a great influence on Grieg's artistic career, and paved the way for it by his persistent efforts to establish a Norwegian art centre, it is of interest



Grieg as a Boy of Fifteen

and pertinent to recall a few incidents in his romantic life. He, also, was born at Bergen, thirty-three years before Grieg, but his experience in school when his musical proclivities were discovered was quite different from Grieg's. The old rector of the Latin school said to him, "Take your fiddle in earnest, boy, and don't waste your time here." He followed this advice, and became a violinist, concerning whom no less an authority than Joachim said: "No artist in our time has possessed his poetic power." He went to Germany to study the violin with the famous Spohr, but found his style too academic to suit him. The capricious, fantastic Paganini was more to his taste, and him he chose for a model, so far as any model he may be said to have had. He soon won a fame and popularity hardly second to the great Italian's, and became an indefatigable traveller, giving concerts in the cities of Scandinavia, Russia, Germany, France, Italy, America. Once, in Paris, he tried to commit suicide by jumping into the river Seine, because his beloved violin had been stolen; but he was rescued, and a wealthy lady gave him another Guarneri. In 1853 his violin was again stolen by a Central American at Panama, when he was on the way to California with Mr. Strakosch. In trying to recover it he

lost his steamer, and while waiting for the next fell a victim to yellow fever. A miniature revolution happening to be in progress, he was not only left unattended, but was obliged to leave his bed and lie on the floor to escape stray bullets. Some years later he was on an Ohio river steamer which crashed into another that had a load of petroleum. Both the steamers were at once surrounded with a circle of fire, but Ole Bull *grasped his violin*, jumped overboard, and succeeded in swimming ashore.

Perhaps the most memorable of his concert tours was that which he undertook in 1853 with the girl soprano, Adelina Patti. Reports of the wonderful art of this child had gone forth, and as one of the American critics remarked, "nothing short of the testimony we have seen could make us believe such a thing possible. Yet the whole artistic life of Ole Bull is a guarantee that nothing but sterling merit can take part in his concerts." Ole Bull's object in giving this particular series of concerts was to raise funds for carrying out a patriotic project of establishing a large Norwegian colony in Pennsylvania — "A New Norway," to cite his own words, "consecrated to liberty, baptized with independence, and protected by the Union's mighty flag." But he

was too thoroughly an artist to be a good business man. After the forests had been cleared and eight hundred settlers made their homes there, he found that he had been swindled; the title to the land he had paid for was fraudulent, and all that remained of his earnings was devoured by the resulting law-suits.

His disappointment was aggravated by the attitude of his countrymen when he returned to his home. He was unjustly accused of having speculated ruthlessly at the expense of those who had confided in him.

He had another cause for dissatisfaction with his neighbours. In view of the fact that, up to that time, Norway had depended on Danish plays, Danish actors, and Danish musicians, he, an ardent patriot, wanted to found a National Theatre in Bergen — a Norse theatre with a Norse orchestra. Such a theatre was actually opened on January 2, 1850, but when he found, a year later, that he could no longer bear the cost, he asked the Storthing for a yearly appropriation. This was refused, and he was subsequently subjected to so many annoyances by his enemies [1] that after two years the theatre passed into other hands. In 1860, however,

[1] See the curious details in *Ole Bull: A Memoir*, by Sara Bull, 1883.

he resumed his direction of it, appointing Björnstjerne Björnson as dramatic instructor. Three years later he tried to found a Norse Music Academy in Christiania. This academy, writes Jonas Lie, was not founded; "but the seed — the thought — was at that time planted. Since then it has grown and matured, and to-day we have a body of artists and composers, and quite another musical culture ready to receive it."

When Ole Bull died in 1880 his patriotic aspirations and services were duly acknowledged. The King sent a telegram of condolence to the widow, expressing his personal as well as the national loss, and Björnstjerne Björnson said, in an address delivered before thousands of mourners: "Patriotism was the creative power in his life. When he established the Norse theatre, assisted Norse art and helped the National Museum, his mighty instrument singing for other patriotic ends; when he helped his countrymen and others wherever he found them it was not so much for the object, or the person, but for the honour of Norway."

Grieg played the organ at the funeral services, and his remarks, which followed Björnson's, must also be cited:

"Because more than any other thou wast the

glory of our land, because more than any other thou hast carried our people with thee up towards the bright heights of art, because thou wast more than any other a pioneer of our young national music; more, much more, than any other, the faithful, warm-hearted conqueror of all hearts, because thou hast planted a seed which shall spring up in the future, and for which coming generations shall bless thee, with the gratitude of thousands upon thousands — for all this, in the name of our Norse memorial art, I lay this laurel wreath on thy coffin. Peace be with thy ashes!"

When Edvard Grieg spoke these words, and for the last time gazed upon the features of his friend and benefactor, he was thirty-seven years old. When he first became acquainted with him he was, as already stated, a lad of about fifteen. The great violinist had returned from America for a temporary sojourn in his native town. He became a frequent visitor at the Grieg mansion, and he promptly discovered the gifts of Edvard, who improvised for him at the piano, and told him about his dreams and hopes of himself becoming a musician.

To cite Grieg's own words: "When he heard I had composed music, I had to go to the piano;

all my entreaties were in vain. I cannot now understand what Ole Bull could find at that time in my juvenile pieces. But he was quite serious and talked quietly to my parents. The matter of their discussion was by no means disagreeable to me. For suddenly Ole Bull came to me, shook me in his own way, and said, 'You are to go to Leipsic, and become a musician.' Everybody looked at me affectionately, and I understood just one thing, that a good fairy was stroking my cheek and that I was happy. And my good parents! Not one moment's opposition or hesitation; everything was arranged, and it seemed to me the most natural thing in the world."

## CHAPTER II

### At the Leipsic Conservatory — Gade

BY an interesting coincidence, the Leipsic Conservatory had been established in the same year that Edvard Grieg was born — 1843. But its founder, Mendelssohn, had died four years later, and Schumann, who had been appointed instructor in score-reading, had gone to Dresden after one year's service; he died in 1856. The Conservatory was thus, at the time of Edvard's arrival, shorn of its chief glory; but it still boasted the names of several men famed in the musical world, among them Moscheles, the eminent pianist and composer; E. F. E. Richter, author of the celebrated treatise on harmony, of which more than twenty editions have been printed; E. F. Wenzel, the noted piano teacher; Moritz Hauptmann, the eminent theorist; and Carl Reinecke, famed as Mozart player, composer, and conductor of the Gewandhaus concerts.

When Grieg was sent to Leipsic he felt "like a

parcel stuffed with dreams." On arriving in the "mediæval" city (Leipsic has changed very much since that time), the "dark, tall, uncanny houses and narrow streets" almost took away his breath. He continued to wear a short blouse with a belt, such as the boys wore at his own home; it was his only reminder of Norway, and he was very homesick. But soon he recovered, and he says, "Although I had not the slightest idea what it meant to study music, I was dead certain that the miracle would happen, and that in three years, when my course of studies came to an end, I should go back home a wizard-master in the kingdom of sounds." Great surprises and disappointments were, however, in store for him.

The first of his piano teachers was the renowned Plaidy, who used to play for his pupils the slow introductory movements of Mendelssohn's Capricios, and then, when he reached the more difficult allegros, remark, as if casually: "And so on"; seriously imagining that the boys did not see through him! Some of the students, among them J. F. Barnett, nevertheless showed brilliant technical results under him. Grieg was much better pleased with his next teachers, E. F. Wenzel, the gifted friend of Schumann, who soon became his idol;

and the famous Ignaz Moscheles. For him, also, Grieg stands up with the greatest warmth:

"It is true that he was naïve enough to believe that he imposed on us by seizing every opportunity to run down Chopin and Schumann, whom I secretly adored; but he could play beautifully: and he did; often taking up the whole lesson. Especially his interpretations of Beethoven, whom he worshipped, were splendid. They were conscientious, full of character, and noble, without any straining after effect. I studied Beethoven's sonatas with him by the dozen. Often I could not play four bars together without his laying his hands on mine, pushing me gently from my seat, and saying, 'Now listen how I do that.' In this way I learned many a little technical secret, and came to value his expressive interpretations at the very highest. I was told at the Conservatory — but here, fortunately, I can speak from personal experience — that he gave his pupils the advice: 'Play diligently, the old masters, Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn and — myself.' I do not guarantee this anecdote. But I call attention to the fact that I myself, following his advice, took in hand his twenty-four Studies (op. 70) and played them all to him, which I do not in the least regret. I liked them and therefore I did

my best to please him and myself. He must have noticed that, for he became from day to day more friendly, and it was perhaps a small but nevertheless an important success for me when one day after I had played one of his études without being once interrupted by him, he turned to the other students with the words: 'There you see, gentlemen, what I call musical playing.' How glad I was! On that day the whole world lay before me flooded with sunshine."

In the harmony class it was characteristic of Grieg that, as he confesses, he always wrote, to the given bass, harmonies which pleased himself, instead of those prescribed by the rules of thorough bass. But E. F. Richter was not the man to encourage these "harmonies of the future," as one might call them; with an indulgent smile he would say: "No! Wrong!" and correct them with thick pencil marks, which, however, Grieg adds, "by no means converted me." He did not realise at this time, he admits, that he was a pupil and should have kept within bounds. Richter did not argue or explain; he simply smiled patiently, and used his pencil.

His other harmony teacher, Robert Papperitz, gave him a freer rein, which encouraged him to

EDVARD GRIEG

go so far out of the beaten path in choral works as to introduce chromatic passages in the voice parts wherever he could. This was too much even for Papperitz, who exclaimed one day: "No! this chromatic work won't do; you are becoming a second Spohr!" Inasmuch as Spohr was, in Grieg's opinion, "an academic pedant of the first rank," he did not enjoy this criticism. Very different were his feelings when, one day, after he had played one of his own compositions, Moritz Hauptmann laid his hand on his shoulder, and said: "Good day, my lad; we must become friends." Furthermore, a fugue by Grieg on the name "Gade," which found no favour in the eyes of Richter, won Hauptmann's approval to such a degree that, against all custom after he had read it through, he exclaimed: "That must sound very pretty — let me hear it"; and when the boy finished, he said, with his gentle smile: "Very pretty, very musical."

In some departments of the Conservatory there seemed to be a curious lack of system. Before Edvard had received a single lesson in violin playing or score-reading Reinecke set him the task of writing a string quartet; nay, he even asked him to compose an overture, although he had been taught nothing about form and instrumentation. The

quartet was, nevertheless, written — "a mediocre piece on the lines of Schumann, Gade, and Mendelssohn — but when it came to the overture he literally stuck in the middle, and could get no further. "There was no class in the Conservatorium in which one could get a grounding in these things."

While the untamed Norwegian lad found it hard to breathe the atmosphere of an institution in which Mendelssohn was the latest approvable composer, whereas his own idols, Chopin and Schumann, not to speak of Wagner, were looked at as rather dangerous revolutionists, he now declares that, if he made little progress, the fault was largely his own; in part, it was, perhaps, national. "We Norwegians, especially, usually develop too slowly to show in the least at the age of eighteen what we are good for." There were other "foreigners" at the Conservatory who "made immense strides forward"; among them, by an interesting coincidence, as many as five boys who subsequently became leaders in the musical world of London. Grieg writes:

"Among these were Arthur Sullivan, afterward so celebrated as the composer of the 'Mikado,' the pianists Franklin Taylor and Walter Bache, and Edward Dannreuther — too early taken from us, so gifted and so unwearied as the champion of

Liszt, and who also was one of the first to enter the lists on behalf of Wagner in England. He was an exceedingly able man, and an eminent player. Lastly there was the fine musician, John Francis Barnett, whom I have mentioned above, and who passed his life as a teacher in London. Sullivan at once distinguished himself by his talent for composition, and for the advanced knowledge of instrumentation which he had acquired before he came to the Conservatorium. While still a student he wrote the music to Shakespeare's 'Tempest,' a few bars of which he once wrote in my album, and which displays the practised hand of an old master. Although I did not come across him much, I once had the pleasure of passing an hour with him, which I shall not forget. It was during a performance of Mendelssohn's 'St. Paul.' We sat and followed the music with the score, and what a score! It was Mendelssohn's own manuscript, which Sullivan had succeeded in borrowing for the occasion from the Director of the Conservatorium, Conrad Schleinitz, who was, as is well known, an intimate friend of Mendelssohn's. With what reverence we turned from one page to another! We were amazed at the clear, firm notes which so well expressed the ideas of the writer."

The truth gradually dawned on Grieg that if he would progress like these English boys he must, like them, submit patiently to drudgery. The pangs of conscience drove him from one extreme to the other; he worked day and night, scarcely allowing himself time to eat and sleep, and the result was a complete collapse, in the spring of 1860. As soon as his mother was informed of his condition she hastened from Bergen to his bedside. The illness culminated in a severe case of pleurisy, or inflammation of the membrane enfolding the lungs. In those days physicians had not yet discovered modern methods of dealing with this serious malady, and the result was that Grieg's health remained impaired all his life; for more than four decades he had only one lung — the right — to breathe with. All the more must we marvel at his achievements! But genius cannot be curbed even by impaired vitality; if it could, the best works of Wagner and Chopin would never have been written.

Mme. Grieg took her son back with her to Bergen, where he slowly improved. In the hope that he might recover completely if he remained during the winter too, his parents were anxious to have him stay under their roof; but he preferred to return to

Leipsic, where, even if the Conservatory was not quite to his liking, there was abundant opportunity to hear good music and meet prominent musicians. He applied himself diligently to his tasks, and was thus able, in the spring of 1862, to pass his examinations with credit; he played on this occasion the four pieces subsequently printed as his opus 1, and won applause and praise both as composer and performer.[1]

Returning to the North, he enjoyed a Norwegian summer at the country home of his parents at Landaas. In the following season he gave his first concert in Bergen, at which his Conservatory string quartet was produced, beside the piano pieces of opus 1, and the Four Songs for Alto, opus 2. With the net receipts, which were encouraging, he purchased a number of scores of orchestral and chamber music, and now, for the first time, applied himself diligently to score-reading, an important branch of his art to which the

[1] The first occasion, however, when Grieg's music was performed was in the spring of 1860, when, as Otto Schmid relates, a Conservatory pupil played some of his piano pieces, which, however, have not been printed. Concerning the examination concert in 1862, just referred to, Grieg writes: "I played some pianoforte pieces of my own; they were lame productions enough, and I still blush to-day that they appeared in print as opus 1; but it is a fact that I had an immense success, and was called for several times."

Leipsic Conservatory appears to have paid insufficient attention after the departure of Schumann. In the spring, 1863, he took up his sojourn in Copenhagen, which, being a much larger city than Bergen, offered better opportunities to an aspiring musician, and which, moreover, was the home of the head of the Scandinavian school, the famous Niels W. Gade.

It has often been said that Gade was at one time the teacher of Grieg. This is not strictly true, for Grieg never took lessons of him; yet he frequently asked the older master's opinion of his new works and admits that he may have profited more by his hints than by the Conservatory course at Leipsic. Shortly after arriving in the Danish capital (in May 1863), Grieg met Gade at Klampenborg, a popular summer resort near Copenhagen, and was asked if he had anything of his own composition to show. Now, while it is true that Schubert and Mendelssohn had written two of their masterworks — the "Erlking," and the "Mid-summer Night's Dream" overture, as lads — most of the other masters, if asked that question at Grieg's age (he was not quite twenty), would have been obliged to answer as he did — that he had nothing of importance to show. "Very well then," retorted

Gade, "go home and write a symphony." This suggestion caused Grieg to pull himself together, and a fortnight later he had actually composed and orchestrated the first movement of a symphony, which he submitted to Gade, who was much pleased with it, and spoke words of encouragement that fired the young man's ambition as nothing else had done theretofore.[1]

Gade has been called the chief of the Scandinavian romantic school, and such he was until Grieg came forward with his best works. Gade's compositions have been shelved too soon; his "Ossian" overture and one or two of his symphonies would even now give more pleasure to concert-goers than most of the contemporary products of Germany and France, because he was a melodist as well as a colourist. Hans von Bülow likened his mastery of orchestration to Wagner's and Liszt's; he was pleased with the deliberateness with which Gade scored his works, and his conscientious regard for details, in reference to which he cites the English,

[1] This juvenile symphony was afterwards completed, but has never been published in its entirety. In a conversation with the Rev. W. A. Gray, reported in the *Woman at Home* for January, 1894, Grieg said that old Lumbye conducted it one evening (he thought it was in 1864) at a symphony concert at the Tivoli. The second and third movements are now accessible in print as opus 14, "Two Symphonic Pieces" for piano, four hands.

"Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle." But what made the eminent Danish composer specially interesting to his contemporaries was the Scandinavian local colour in his works. Concerning this, Robert Schumann wrote in one of the last essays that came from his suggestive pen:

"We have in him an entirely new artistic type. It appears, indeed, as if the nations bordering on Germany were trying to emancipate themselves from the leadership of German music; a chauvinist (*Deutschtümler*) might grieve thereat, but to a thinker and student of mankind it will seem natural and gratifying. Thus Chopin represents his native country; Bennett, England; in Holland, J. Verhulst arouses hopes of becoming a worthy representative of his country; in Hungary, likewise, national efforts are being made. And while they all regard the German nation as their first and most esteemed teacher, no one should be surprised at their wishing to have a national musical language of their own, without becoming faithless to the teachings of their mistress. . . .

"In the north of Europe, too, we have seen manifestations of national tendencies. Lindblad, in Stockholm (the teacher of Jenny Lind), translated

for us the old folk-songs, and Ole Bull, though not a productive talent of the first rank, endeavoured to acclimate with us the strains of his native land. The new school of gifted Scandinavian poets must have stimulated the local musicians, in case they were not reminded by the mountains and lakes, the runes and the auroral displays, of the fact that *the North is most decidedly entitled to a language of its own.*

"Our young composer (Gade) also was educated by the poets of his fatherland; he knows and loves them all; the old fairy tales and legends accompanied him on his boyish walks, and Ossian's giant harp loomed up across the water from the English coast. Thus there is manifested in his music, beginning with the Ossian overture, for the first time a decided and specific Northern character."

Nearly all the biographic sketches of Grieg in encyclopædias and elsewhere cite him as having said, after becoming acquainted with the young Norwegian composer Nordraak: "It was as though scales fell from my eyes; through him, for the first time, I became acquainted with the Northern folk-music and with my own bent. We abjured the Gade-Mendelssohn insipid Scandinavianism, and entered with enthusiasm on the new path which

the Northern school is now following." But in private letters to the author of this volume Grieg has twice regretted if he should have uttered such a sneer at Gade, whom he has always held in the highest esteem, both as a man and a composer.[1] However, if he had made that remark, it would not have been wide of the mark, for Gade certainly does show the influence of Mendelssohn and other German composers much more than that of the Scandinavian folk-music. Had Grieg followed his example he would not have become a specifically Norse composer, but — what some have foolishly reproached him for not being — a cosmopolite. Luckily there were two other Scandinavian musicians, Norwegians both, who led him back from the over-tilled German fields to the virgin forests, the peasants, the peaks, the fjords of Norway.

[1] "Ich bin mir nicht bewusst diese Ansicht jemals in so crassen Worten ausgedrückt zu haben. Und ich bin ein zu grosser Verehrer von Gade in seinen besten Werken, und bin ihm zu viel schuldig, um eine so pietätlose Ansicht colportieren zu helfen. Also bitte, heraus damit!"

## CHAPTER III

### From Germany to Norway

THE two men referred to were Ole Bull and Richard Nordraak. It was stated on a previous page that Ole Bull on two occasions exerted a great influence on Grieg's career. The first was when he persuaded his parents to send him to Leipsic; with the second we are now concerned.

Ole Bull always, when possible, went home to spend the summer in his country house at Valestrand, on the Island Osteröen, about twenty miles east of Bergen. It was here that Grieg, beginning with the year 1864, formed an intimate friendship with the great violinist. They often played Mozart's sonatas and other duos together; sometimes John Grieg joined them with his violoncello, and they had trios. At other times Edvard Grieg and Ole Bull made excursions together into their favourite mountain regions, and these were particularly potent in directing the trend of Grieg's genius. Professor R. B. Anderson once asked Ole Bull

what had inspired his weird and original melodies. "His answer was that from his earliest childhood he had taken the profoundest delight in Norway's natural scenery. He grew eloquent in his poetic description of the grand and picturesque flower-clad valleys, filled with soughing groves and singing birds; of the silver-crested mountains, from which the summer sun never departs; of the melodious brooks, babbling streams, and thundering rivers; of the blinking lakes that sink their deep thoughts to starlit skies; of the far-penetrating fjords, and the many thousand islands on the coast. He spoke with special emphasis of the eagerness with which he had devoured all myths, folk-tales, ballads, and popular melodies; and all these things, he said, 'have made my music.'"

Sara Bull relates that "when, in early childhood, playing alone in the meadows, he saw a delicate blue-bell gently moving in the breeze, he fancied he heard the bell ring, and the grass accompany it with most enrapturing fine voices; *he fancied he heard nature sing*, and thus music revealed itself, or came to his consciousness as something that might be reproduced. . . . He was never happier than when he could persuade his grandmothers to tell him strange ghost stories, and sing the wild

songs of the peasantry." He soon formed the habit of visiting remote valleys, listening to the dances and other tunes of the peasants, and transferring them to his violin; and it was with these wild tunes — with the "Saeterbesoeget," the "Saeterjentens Sondag," "En Moders Boen," and the like that he aroused the wildest enthusiasm of his audiences in all parts of Europe and America.

To hear such a man play, to play with him, to accompany him to the home of the peasants and hear their music there — these were the privileges of Edvard Grieg in his twenty-first year and later, and the consequences were inevitable. Ole Bull, whose motto was, "My calling is Norse music," was naturally pleased to have so sympathetic and talented a young companion, although there were reasons for disapproval of him. While both agreed in their love of Mozart, the violinist had no use for the modern composers of whom his young friend was enamoured. Wagner he positively detested: "he ought to be lodged in prison," he used to say. In Grieg's compositions, too, he could not fail to discover traces of heretical modernity, even at this early period, but he generously made allowance for these in view of other qualities that did appeal to his taste.

At this early period in Grieg's artistic career we already come across one of his noble traits. He may have been weakened in body, but his mind was sturdy and inflexible. Neither of his best friends — his father and Ole Bull — approved of what was most original and best in him, yet that did not prevent him from following whither his fancy led, regardless of consequences. Herein he resembled Wagner, who, when his contemporaries found him too "Wagnerian," retorted by becoming more and more so.[1]

His determination to follow the bent of his own genius must have been greatly strengthened at this time by his friendship with Rikard Nordraak, a young Norwegian composer of rare talent, who might have done as much for his native country as Grieg himself, had not death carried him off before he had completed his twenty-fourth year. Even in this short span of life he created some notable works, among them pianoforte pieces,

[1] It has been related that when Grieg showed his first violin sonata to Gade, that eminent composer discovered therein much evidence of talent, but thought it "too Norwegian." But Grieg informed me that this is an error: "The first sonata (op. 8) had Gade's warm sympathy, the second (in G), on the other hand, he found too Norwegian." After the first performance of this sonata in Copenhagen, Gade came into the artist's room and said: "Dear Grieg, the next sonata you must really make less Norwegian." Grieg was in a defiant mood and retorted: "On the contrary, Professor, the next will be more so!"

settings of his cousin Björnson's "Mary Stuart in Scotland," "Sigurd Slembe," and the patriotic song, "Ja vi elsker." Like Ole Bull, he was patriot to the verge of fanaticism, and Grieg, who had loved his fatherland above everything even before he knew these two men, had his glowing feelings fanned to a bright flame by intercourse with them, especially with Nordraak, who, being only a year older, was the more suitable companion for him. They first met in the winter of 1864, and it was a case of friendship at first sight. Nordraak accompanied Grieg to his home, and there, as on many subsequent occasions, they indulged in music to their heart's content, and discussed patriotic topics.

The most important effect of the friendship with Nordraak was that it hastened Grieg's journey from Germany to Norway, musically speaking. Up to this point he had felt the Leipsic shackles — the need of being more or less German in his themes and modes of utterance. He had been in danger of being swallowed up in the great maelstrom of German music; but he saw his peril in time and steered back into the Norwegian branch of the ocean. He had been somewhat timid, but Nordraak's courage and enthusiasm proved contagious. He now dared to be himself and Norse. If he was

proud of being a Norwegian by birth, why should he be ashamed to be Norwegian in his music? He wrote his four "Humoresken," opus 6, dedicated them to Nordraak, and the die was cast. Thenceforth he was free to do as he pleased, and in a short time the germs of individuality that are not absent even in his first works grew and expanded until they formed a new kind of music differing from the classical German art somewhat as an exotic orchid of the forest differs from our no less beautiful but more regular garden flowers.

There are several ways of fostering national art: by discussion, by creation, and by public performance. Grieg and Nordraak adopted all of these methods. In the winter of 1864–65 they founded at Copenhagen the Euterpe Society, the object of which was to bring forward the works of young Northern composers. With them were associated the opera composer Hornemann and the organist and composer Matthison-Hansen. But the Euterpe lived only a few seasons. In the spring Nordraak left Copenhagen and went to Berlin, while Grieg spent the summer with the Danish author Benjamin Feddersen, in the village Rungsted.[1] The

[1] Benjamin Feddersen has over a hundred letters written to him by Grieg; but these have not yet been printed.

GRIEG AND SVENDSEN, 1898

*From a photograph by K. Nyblin.*

following details are cited from the interview placed on record by the Rev. W. A. Gray, in *The Woman at Home:*

"Whether it was the lovely situation, or the invigorating air which inspired me, I won't pretend to say. At any rate, within eleven days I had composed my sonata for the pianoforte, and very soon after my first sonata for the violin. I took them both to Gade, who was living out at Klampenborg. He glanced through them with satisfaction, nodded, tapped me on the shoulder, and said:

"'That's very nice indeed. Now we'll go over them carefully and look into all the seams.'

"So we climbed a small steep staircase to Gade's studio, where he sat down at the grand pianoforte and played with absolute inspiration.

"I had often been told that, when Gade was inspired, he drank copious draughts of water. That day the Professor emptied four large water-bottles.

"Gade, however, wasn't always so good-humoured. When, for example, I brought him some time afterwards the score of my overture 'In Autumn,' he shook his head:

"'No, Grieg; that won't do. You must go home and write something better.'

"I was quite disheartened by this verdict. Soon

after, however, I obtained an unexpected revenge. I arranged the overture as a duet for the pianoforte and sent it to Stockholm, where, just then, the Academy of Music had announced a prize for the best overture. I was awarded the prize by the judges, of whom Gade was one. He must either have forgotten the piece in the intervening time, or have been in a very bad temper on the day when I showed it him."

The overture referred to — Grieg's first orchestral work — had been composed during his first sojourn in Rome, in the winter of 1865. In the following March he was deeply grieved by the announcement of the death of Nordraak, which he commemorated in tones by writing a funeral march. He narrowly escaped joining his friend, for he was prostrated by the Roman fever. Fortunately, some Danish friends were at hand to take care of him, but it was not till May that he was able to return to Norway.

## CHAPTER IV

### Christiania — Marriage — Liszt

IF Grieg's "Jeg elsker dig" ("I love thee") is one of the most impassioned and popular of all love songs, there is a reason for it. The date of its composition is 1864; in that year he became engaged to his cousin, Miss Nina Hagerup, love for whom had inspired him to set to music H. C. Andersen's heartfelt lines. Three years, however, elapsed before he was able to marry her. Miss Hagerup's mother had no high opinion of her prospective son-in law; "He is a nobody," she said to a friend; "he has nothing, and he writes music that nobody cares to listen to." The fact that only two copies were bought of his first printed songs seemed to confirm her conviction; but the singer Stenberg (subsequently one of the best interpreters of Grieg's lieder) advised her to wait and see, predicting that Edvard would become famous.[1]

[1] Nina Hagerup was born at Bergen in 1845 — a granddaughter of Edvard Hagerup. After her seventh year she lived at Copenhagen. Her mother was a famous Danish actress, who assumed the management of her first husband's (Werligh's) company. After her marriage to Hermann Hagerup she left the stage. Nina Hagerup evidently in-

There was no opposition to the marriage; it was simply the old story: the composer was too poor to support a wife. When he returned to Norway from Rome he took up his residence in Christiania, eager to do any work that would contribute to his subsistence. On his way to the Norwegian capital he made a stop of a few months at Copenhagen, where he took lessons on the organ of Matthison-Hansen, and played at the German church (Friedrichskirche) during his teacher's vacation. It was toward the end of September 1866 that he arrived at Christiania. Soon thereafter he gave a concert with the aid of his *fiancée* and Mme. Normann Neruda (Lady Hallé), the eminent violinist. The programme was notable, inasmuch as it was probably the first one ever made up entirely of Norwegian music. It contained the following numbers:

1. Grieg: Violin sonata, opus 8.
2. Nordraak: Songs.
3. Grieg: Humoresken, for piano, opus 6.
4. Grieg: Songs.
5. Grieg: Sonata for pianoforte, opus 7.
6. Kjerulf: Songs.

herited her mother's dramatic gifts, as revealed in her singing of Grieg's songs. During the period of the engagement to his Danish bride, Grieg was so much under Danish influence that Schjelderup speaks of it as the Danish period in the development of his genius.

This concert was a most encouraging success, both with the public and the press. Grieg's position seemed assured. The Philharmonic Society appointed him conductor, and he was in great demand as a teacher. For a time all his energies were thus absorbed, so that little leisure remained for composing. For eight years Christiania was his home. He married Nina Hagerup on June 11, 1867, and gave subscription concerts with his young wife, beside the Philharmonic entertainments. Presently, however, interest in the new national movement began to subside, and his life was made a burden by cabals which owed their existence partly to jealousy, partly to the energetic war he had been waging on amateurish mediocrity. When in 1868, his best friend and ally, Halfdan Kjerulf, died, he felt quite isolated, and became discouraged.[1] In the following year he lost his daughter, aged thirteen months, the only child he ever had, and the cup of bitterness seemed emptied to the dregs. Yet he persevered stubbornly in his struggles to educate the musical taste of the community. Among

[1] Kjerulf, who was born in 1815, was really the first of the Norwegian national composers. He established a series of subscription concerts at Christiania in 1857. Among his compositions there are about a hundred songs and forty piano pieces that are mostly tinged with Norse colour. He has been referred to as a martyr, but Grieg writes: "Kjerulf lived in Christiania as teacher and composer, appreciated by all."

the works produced under his direction were Schumann's "Paradise and the Peri" and "Gipsy Life," Gade's "Elverskud," Lindblad's "Vinterquäll," Kjerulf's "Trubaduren," Liszt's "Tasso," selections from "Lohengrin," Mendelssohn's "Elijah," Mozart's Requiem. He also found time, amidst all his discouragements, to compose some of his best works — songs, pianoforte pieces, and the superb piano concerto. This concerto, he informed me, was written during his vacation, in the summer of 1868, in the Danish village of Sölleröd, whence we may infer that, like Wagner, he was quite as busy, in his own way, during his "vacation" as during the "season" in town.

One of the pleasantest episodes of the eight years' sojourn in Christiania was related by Grieg himself in an article he wrote in 1902 as a contribution to a brochure printed in honour of his dear friend Björnson's seventieth birthday. It is one of those fragments that make one regret keenly that Grieg did not write his autobiography.

"It was on Christmas Eve, 1868, at the Björnsons," he relates.[1] "They lived at that time in the Rosenkranz Street. My wife and I were, so far

[1] My translation is made after the German version, which appeared in the *Berliner Tageblatt*.

as I can recall, the only guests. The joy of the children was great. On the floor in the middle of the room there stood a huge Christmas tree, brilliantly illuminated. All the servants came in, and Björnson spoke, warmly and impressively, as is his wont. Then he said to me: 'Now you may play the choral, Grieg!' and although I was secretly somewhat displeased at having to play the *rôle* of organist, I obeyed, as a matter of course, without remonstrance. It was a Grundtvig choral with *thirty-two* stanzas! With stoic resignation I submitted to my fate. At first I bore myself bravely, but the endless repetitions had a soporific effect. I gradually became lethargic, like a medium. And when we had at last lumbered through all the stanzas, Björnson exclaimed: 'Is it not wonderfully beautiful? I shall now read it to you.' And once more the thirty-two stanzas were inflicted on us. I was entirely overcome.

"Among the Christmas presents there was a book for me, Björnson's ('Short) Pieces.' On the title-page he had written: 'Thanks for your (Short) Pieces. Herewith a few to match them.' The reference was to the first volume of my 'Lyrical Pieces,' just published, of which I had sent him a copy that day. Among these there is one with the

title 'Vaterlandslied' ('Patriotic Song'). This I played for Björnson, and he liked it so well that he felt inclined to write a poem to it. I was delighted. Afterwards, however, I was afraid it would remain a mere inclination. He had other things in hand. The very next day, however, I found him, to my surprise, in creative fervour over it. 'I am getting on with it finely,' he said. 'It is to be a song for all young Norwegians. But at the beginning there is something that has so far baffled me. A quite definite *Wortklang*. I feel that the melody demands it, yet it eludes me. But it will come.' Then we parted.

"The next morning, while I was sitting in my garret room in the Upper Wall Street giving a lesson to a young lady, some one in the street pulled the bell cord as if he were trying to tear out the whole thing. Then there was a clattering as if a wild horde were breaking in, and a voice shouting, 'Forward! Forward! Hurrah! I have it! Forward!' My pupil trembled like an aspen leaf. My wife, in the adjoining room, was almost frightened out of her wits. But when, a moment later, the door was opened, and Björnson stood there, joyous and beaming like a sun, there was great glee. And then we listened to the beautiful poem just completed:

BJÖRNSON. MRS. GRIEG. MRS. BJÖRNSON. GRIEG

Fremad! Födres hoie Härtag var,
Fremad! Nordmand, ogsaa vi det tar!

"The song was sung for the first time by the students at their torchlight procession for Welhaven, in 1868."

In the same week that this amusing episode occurred, a letter was written that was destined to prove a great aid to Grieg in his struggles. On December 29, 1868, Franz Liszt wrote to him, from Rome, the following letter, in French:

"Monsieur, it gives me great pleasure to tell you of the sincere enjoyment I derived from a perusal of your sonata (opus 8). It bears witness to a strong talent for composition, a talent that is reflective, inventive, provided with excellent material, and which needs only to follow its natural inclinations to rise to a high rank. I comfort myself with the belief that you will find in your country the success and encouragement you deserve; nor will you miss them elsewhere; and if you visit Germany this winter I invite you cordially to spend some time at Weimar, that we may become acquainted. Veuillez bien recevoir, monsieur, l'assurance de mes sentiments d'estime et de considération très distinguée."

Without exception, the writers on Grieg have

assumed that he had sent his sonata to Liszt for a critical opinion. Now, Liszt complains, in one of his letters, of the mountains of manuscript and printed music thus sent to him by composers; but Grieg was not one of these; he assured me that he had not sent Liszt anything, and had had no personal relations with him up to that time ("Ich hatte Liszt nichts geschickt und hatte überhaupt gar keine persönliche Beziehungen zu ihm"). All the more significant was that cordial letter from Liszt; it indicated that that great pianist and composer, whose chief delight in life was the discovery and encouragement of musical genius, had scented a new track, which he, amid the surrounding wilds of worthless manuscripts, was as eager to follow as a naturalist-explorer is to discover new flora or fauna in regions unknown. And the letter had momentous consequences. Unsolicited commendation from one so famous as Liszt was a great feather in the cap of a twenty-five-year-old composer; it induced the Norwegian Government to grant Grieg a sum of money which enabled him, in the following year, to visit Rome again, and there to meet Liszt personally. He left Christiania in October, and a few months later he wrote to his parents two extremely interesting letters regarding his visits

to Liszt, which he has fortunately given to the world.[1] The first meeting was at the monastery near the forum Romanum which Liszt made his home when in town. The Danish musician, Ravnkilde, who resided in Rome, had told Grieg that Liszt liked to have his invited visitors bring along something to show and to play.

"Unfortunately," Grieg writes, "my last compositions were at home or in Germany; so I had to go to Winding, to whom I had given a copy of my last violin sonata, and play 'the giver who takes his present back.' Winding kept the cover, I took the contents, and having written on the outside, 'Til Dr. F. Liszt med beundring' ['to Dr. F. Liszt with admiration'], I took also my funeral march on the death of Nordraak and a volume of my songs (the one with the 'Ausfahrt' in it [opus 9]), and with all these under my arm I tramped down the street, with, I must admit, some qualms, which, however, I might have saved myself, for a more kindly disposition than Liszt's is rarely met with. He came smilingly towards me and said, in the most genial manner:

"'Nicht wahr, wir haben ein bischen korrespon-

[1] The originals were first printed in 1892 in a pamphlet issued in Bergen by way of celebrating Grieg's silver wedding. They are dated February 17 and April 9, 1870.

dirt?' ('We have had some little correspondence, haven't we?')

"I told him that it was thanks to his letters that I was now here — which made him laugh quite like Ole Bull. His eyes in the meantime were fixed with a hungry expression on the package I had under my arm. 'Ah, ha,' I thought, 'Ravnkilde was right.' And his long spider-like fingers approached the package in such an alarming manner that I thought it advisable to open it at once. He now commenced to turn over the leaves, that is to say, he skimmed over the first movement of the sonata, and that there was no sham about his really reading it, he soon showed by significant nods or a 'bravo,' or a 'sehr schön' ['very fine'] when he came across one of the best passages. He had now become interested, but my courage dropped below zero when he asked me to play the sonata. It had never occurred to me to attempt the whole score on the pianoforte, and I was anxious, on the other hand, to avoid stumbling when playing for him. But there was no help for it."

"So I started on his splendid American grand (Chickering). Right at the beginning, where the violin starts in with a rather baroque but national passage, he exclaimed: 'Ei wie keck! Nun hören

Sie mal, das gefällt mir. Noch einmal bitte!' ('How bold that is! Look here, I like that. Once more, please.') And where the violin again comes in adagio, he played the violin part on the upper octaves of the piano with an expression so beautiful, so marvellously true and singing, that it made me smile inwardly. These were the first tones I heard Liszt play; and now we passed rapidly into the allegro, he taking the violin part, I the piano. My spirits rose gradually, because his approval, which he manifested in a truly lavish way, did me good, and I felt myself imbued with the strongest feelings of gratitude. When we had come to the end of the first movement, I asked his permission to play a piano solo, selecting the minuet in the set of 'Humoresques' which you surely remember. When I had played the first eight measures and repeated them, he sang along the melody, and did it with an expression of a certain heroic power which I understood very well. I observed that it was the national peculiarities he liked; this I had suspected before going to him, and had therefore taken with me the pieces in which I had tried to strike the national strings.

"After playing the minuet I felt that if it were possible to get Liszt to play for me now was the

time; he was visibly inspired. I asked him, and he shrugged his shoulders a little; but when I said it could not be his intention that I should leave the South without having heard a single tone by him, he made a turn and then muttered: 'Nun ich spiele was Sie wollen, ich bin nicht so' ('Very well, I'll play whatever you like, I am not like that[1]'); and forthwith he seized a score he had lately finished, a kind of a funeral procession to the grave of Tasso, a supplement to his famous symphonic poem for the orchestra, 'Tasso: Lamento e Trionfo.' Then he sat down and put the keys in motion. Yes, I assure you, he discharged (*udspyede*), if I may use so inelegant an expression, one volley after another of heat and flame and vivid thoughts. It sounded as if he had evoked the *manes* of Tasso. He made the colours glaring, but such a subject is just the thing for him; the expression of tragic grandeur is his strong point. I did not know what to admire most in him, the composer or the pianist, for he played superbly. No, he does not really play — one forgets he is a musician, he becomes a prophet

[1] Grieg evidently did not know what a deadly sin he committed in asking Liszt to play. His most intimate friends, including the Princess von Wittgenstein, never dared to do that, and if any one else did it he almost invariably refused. His saying, "Ich bin nicht so," implies that he was willing, on this occasion, to make an exception to his rule, which in itself was an extraordinary compliment to the young Norwegian.

proclaiming the Last Judgment till all the spirits of the universe vibrate under his fingers. He enters into the most secret recesses of the mind and stirs one's inmost soul with demonic power.

"When this was done Liszt said jauntily, 'Now let us go on with the sonata,' to which I naturally retorted: 'No, thank you, after this I do not want to.' But now comes the best part of the story. Liszt exclaimed, 'Nun, warum nicht, geben Sie mal her, dann werde ich es thun.' ('Why not? Then give it me, I'll do it.') Now you must bear in mind, in the first place, that he had never seen or heard the sonata, and in the second place that it was a sonata with a violin part, now above, now below, independent of the pianoforte part. And what does Liszt do? He plays the whole thing, root and branch, violin and piano, nay, more, for he played fuller, more broadly. The violin got its due right in the middle of the piano part. He was literally over the whole piano at once, without missing a note, and how he did play! With grandeur, beauty, genius, unique comprehension. I think I laughed — laughed like an idiot. And when I stammered a few complimentary words, he muttered: 'Nun, das werden Sie mir doch zutrauen, etwas vom Blatt zu spielen, ich bin ja ein alter

gerwandter Musiker.' ('Surely you must expect me to be able to play a thing at sight, for I am an old experienced musician.')

"Was not this geniality itself, from beginning to end? No other great man I have met is like him. In conclusion I played the Funeral March, which also was to his taste. Then I had a little talk with him, telling him among other things that my father had heard him in London in 1824, which pleased him ('Yes, yes, I have travelled and played much in the world — too much,' he said), took my leave, and walked homeward, feeling strangely hot in my head, but with the consciousness of having spent two of the most interesting hours in my life. I am invited for to-morrow, and am naturally very glad of it.

"The day after the first meeting just described, the Italians, Sgambati [1] and Pinelli (a pupil of Joachim), played my first violin sonata at a matinée, which was attended by all society. Liszt came in the middle of the concert, just before my sonata, and this was fortunate for me. The applause the

[1] Sgambati, whose mother was an Englishwoman, was a special protégé, not only of Liszt, but of Wagner, on whose recommendation Schott published his chamber music and orchestral works. He was the first to produce Beethoven's "Eroica" symphony and Liszt's "Dante" symphony in Rome.

sonata got I do not place to my credit. The fact is, that when Liszt applauds everybody applauds, each trying to outdo the others."

Grieg's second meeting with Liszt, which took place shortly after the above letter was written, was no less interesting than the first. It is thus described by him:

"I had fortunately just received the manuscript of my pianoforte concerto from Leipsic, and took it with me. Beside myself there were present Winding, Sgambati, and a German Lisztite, whose name I do not know, but who goes so far in the aping of his idol that he even wears the gown of an abbé; add to these a Chevalier de Concilium, and some young ladies of the kind that would like to eat Liszt, skin, hair, and all, their adulation is simply comical. . . . Winding and I were very anxious to see if he would really play my concerto at sight. I, for my part, considered it impossible; not so Liszt. 'Will you play?' he asked, and I made haste to reply: 'No, I cannot' (you know I have never practised it). Then Liszt took the manuscript, went to the piano, and said to the assembled guests, with his characteristic smile, 'Very well, then, I will show you that I also cannot.' With that he began. I admit that he took the

first part of the concerto too fast, and the beginning consequently sounded helter-skelter; but later on, when I had a chance to indicate the tempo, he played as only he can play. It is significant that he played the cadenza, the most difficult part, best of all. His demeanour is worth any price to see. Not content with playing, he at the same time converses and makes comments, addressing a bright remark now to one, now to another of the assembled guests, nodding significantly to the right or left, particularly when something pleases him. In the adagio, and still more in the finale, he reached a climax both as to his playing and the praise he had to bestow.

"A really divine episode I must not forget. Toward the end of the finale the second theme is, as you may remember, repeated in a mighty fortissimo. In the very last measures, when in the first triplets the first tone is changed in the orchestra from G sharp to G, while the piano part, in a mighty scale passage, rushes wildly through the whole reach of the keyboard, he suddenly stopped, rose up to his full height, left the piano, and with big theatric strides and arms uplifted walked across the large cloister hall, at the same time literally roaring the theme. When he got to the G in ques-

tion he stretched out his arms imperiously and exclaimed: 'G, G, not G sharp! Splendid! That is the real Swedish Banko!' to which he added very softly, as in a parenthesis: 'Smetana sent me a sample the other day.' He went back to the piano repeated the whole strophe, and finished. In conclusion, he handed me the manuscript, and said, in a peculiarly cordial tone: 'Fahren Sie fort, ich sage Ihnen, Sie haben das Zeug dazu, und — lassen Sie sich nicht abschrecken!' ('Keep steadily on; I tell you, you have the capability, and — do not let them intimidate you!')

"This final admonition was of tremendous importance to me; there was something in it that seemed to give it an air of santification. At times, when disappointment and bitterness are in store for me, I shall recall his words, and the remembrance of that hour will have a wonderful power to uphold me in days of adversity."

On his return from Rome Grieg resided again at Christiania, resuming his former activity, and in the following year he founded the "Musical Society." In the conducting of this he had a valuable coadjutor in Johan Svendsen,[1] who became

[1] Svendsen, who was three years older than Grieg, was a native of Christiania, and ranks as one of the leading Norwegian composers.

his successor when he himself left the capital in 1874. Svendsen had given a concert at Christiania in 1867, of which Grieg had written an enthusiastic notice anonymously in one of the local newspapers. The two composers now became intimate friends, each benefiting by the other's criticism and sympathy. The Musical Society had choral works on its programmes, and as Grieg was also conductor of the Philharmonic Society, he thus had opportunity for acquiring a thorough familiarity with the master-works in diverse branches of music — a familiarity which, while it widened his horizon and sharpened his tools, did not in the least impair his originality, which grew apace with every successive work. Not a few of his compositions of the Christiania period were inspired by the writings of Björnstjerne Björnson, of whose friendly intercourse we have already had a delightful glimpse.

Unlike Grieg, the bulk of whose work is for pianoforte and solo voice, he wrote chiefly chamber music and orchestral compositions; the latter belong to the genre of programme music, and there is more or less national colouring, notably in the four "Norwegian Rhapsodies" and the "Norse Carnival." To Svendsen Grieg dedicated his second violin sonata.

## CHAPTER V

### Ibsen and "Peer Gynt"

THE rulers of Scandinavia have set a noble example to other countries by their treatment of native men of genius. In the year of Grieg's birth the Danish Government granted Gade a stipend which enabled him to continue his education at Leipsic, and subsequently he received one for life. Norway aided Svendsen and Grieg in the same way; in 1874 it was their good luck to be honoured and rewarded each with an annuity of 1600 crowns (about £88) a year for life. As a pound buys much more in Norway than in England or America, this was a larger sum than it may seem. It enabled Grieg to give up teaching and conducting, and to devote himself to composing and making his works known at home and abroad. So he left Christiania, after a sojourn of eight years, and returned for the time being to his native city, where he devoted himself to one of the most important tasks of his life — the writing of the music to "Peer Gynt," which brought him into

close association with another of the remarkable group of great men produced in modern Norway — Henrik Ibsen.

If it is remarkable that a town of the size of Bergen should have given to the world so many notable men of genius — Holberg, the social reformer and founder of modern Danish literature; the poet Welhaven, the painter Dahl, the musicians Ole Bull and Grieg — it is even more remarkable that three of the most prominent literary and musical creators of the nineteenth century — Ibsen, Björnson, Grieg — should hail Norway as their native country. To understand the full significance of this we must not look at the size of Norway (30,000 square miles), but at the number of its inhabitants (about 2,292,000). At the same ratio England ought to have about fifty, and the United States about a hundred, literary and musical creators of the same rank and fame — figures of which we fall short lamentably.

Henrik Ibsen, who has been almost as much abused and praised as Richard Wagner, first appears in our story of Grieg's life in January 1874. On the twenty-third day of that month he wrote a letter from Dresden, which is so interesting that it must be cited here in full: —

*Ole Olsen. Lammers. Cappelen. Halvorsen. Frau Grieg. Svendsen. Sinding.*
*Frau Gmür-Harloff. Frau Agathe Gröndahl. Grieg. Schjelderup. Frau Erika die Niessen. Holter.*

A Group of Distinguished Scandinavians

"Dear Mr. Grieg,

"I send you these lines because of a plan I wish to carry out, and in reference to which I want to ask whether you are willing to co-operate with me.

"The following is what I have in view. I intend to arrange 'Peer Gynt' — of which a third edition is to appear soon — for performance on the stage. Will you write the required music? Let me tell you as briefly as possible how I project the structure of the play.

"The first act will be retained entire, with the exception of some of the dialogue. Peer Gynt's monologue on pages 23, 24, and 25 [224–227][1] I should like to have treated either melodramatically or partly as recitative. The scene at the house where the wedding is celebrated [page 227] must be made, with the aid of the ballet, much more effective than it is in the book. For this it will be necessary to compose a special dance-melody, which is heard softly to the end of the act.

"In the second act, the scene in which the three dairymaids appear [pages 244–46] must be treated musically as the composer sees fit, but the devil must be at large in it! The monologue [pp. 246–48] I have conceived as being accompanied by harmonies, that is, as a melodrama. The same is true of the scene between Peer and the woman in green [pp. 248–50]. A sort of accompaniment must also be provided for the episodes in the hall of the Dovre king, in which, however, the dialogue is to be considerably curtailed. Also the scene with the hunchback, which is given entire, must have music. The bird-

[1] Ibsen's references are to the Norwegian edition; the numbers in brackets refer to vol. iv. of the ten-volume German translation of Ibsen's works and letters. As English and American readers of this book are more likely to know German than Norwegian, I retain in the text only the numbers referring to the German version, on which mine is based. (Since the first edition of this book was printed an English version of Ibsen's plays and letters has been published.)

voices must be sung; chimes and a choir singing a choral are heard far away.

"In the third act I need harmonies — but sparsely — for the scene between Peer, the woman, and the *trolljunge* [pp. 272–75]. Likewise I have soft music in view for pages 281–84.

"Nearly all of the fourth act is to be omitted at the performance. In its place I have imagined a great musical tone-painting which suggests Peer Gynt's gadding about in the wide world; American, English, and French melodies might appear therein, and recur as motives. The chorus of Anitra and the girls [pp. 308–9] is to be heard behind the curtain, sustained by orchestral music. Meanwhile the curtain rises and the spectators see, as in a dream, the tableau as described [p. 325], in which Solvejg, as a middle-aged woman, sits in the sunshine in front of the house and sings. After she has finished her song the curtain falls slowly, the music is continued by the orchestra and proceeds to portray the storm at sea with which the fifth act begins.

"The fifth act, which at the performance will be called the fourth or a postlude, must be considerably reduced. Beginning with pages 346–49, a musical accompaniment is called for. The scenes on the boat and in the cemetery will be omitted. Solvejg sings [p. 366] and the postlude accompanies the speech of Peer Gynt which follows, after which it passes into the choruses [pp. 367–69]. The scenes with the button-maker and the Dovre king will be abbreviated. The churchgoers [p. 389] sing on their way through the woods. Chimes and distant choral song are suggested by the music as the action proceeds, until Solvejg's song concludes the piece; whereupon the curtain drops, while the choral again resounds nearer and louder.

"Such, approximately, is my plan, and I now beg you to let me know if you are willing to undertake this work. If you consent, I shall at once communicate with the director of the

Christiania Theatre, give him a copy of the modified text, and ensure in advance a performance of the play. The royalty I shall insist on will be 400 *Speciesthaler*, to be divided between us in equal parts. I take it for granted that we can also count on performances of the play in Copenhagen and Stockholm. But I beg you to treat the matter for the present as a secret, and to let me have an answer as soon as possible.

"Your devoted friend,

"Henrik Ibsen."

Here was something to kindle the ambition and fire the imagination of the thirty-one-year-old Grieg! He lost no time in accepting the tempting offer, and wrote for Ibsen's play a number of inspired pieces of music, which, subsequently grouped together as suites and played in concert halls, helped, perhaps more than any of his other works, to make him known the world over as an original and fascinating composer. We shall return to this music in a later chapter. In this place it will suffice to record that the first performance of "Peer Gynt" was given at the Christiania Theatre on February 24, 1876, just half a year before the first Wagner Festival at Bayreuth. The plan had been somewhat modified, and the cuts were not entirely identical with those suggested in Ibsen's letter. The play proved a genuine success; it was given thirty-six times that year, and up to 1905 had been heard, as I was informed by Mr. Halvorsen, seventy

times in Christiania, and many times also in the other Scandinavian cities. Considering that the poem is quite as fantastic and as untheatrical as the second part of Goethe's "Faust," this is certainly a remarkable record, for which Grieg's delightful music is largely responsible. Ibsen himself realised that it had been a hazardous undertaking to put this poem on the stage, and he confessed in a letter that the success had surpassed all his expectations, adding that he was also "cordially pleased to hear that there was but one opinion on this point in Christiania."

When I was at work on the first edition of this book I wrote to Grieg asking for information regarding the circumstances under which "Peer Gynt" was written and produced. His answer, dated Troldhaugen, July 30, 1905, was as follows:

"You want to know something about the origin of the 'Peer Gynt' music. How gladly I would meet your wishes. But my memory says no. However, I will see if anything is left in my brain. I believe it was in the winter or spring of 1873 that Ibsen asked me to write the music to 'P. G.' I began it in the summer of 1873 in Sandviken near Bergen, continued it the following winter in Copenhagen, and orchestrated the whole thing at Fredens-

WHERE GRIEG WROTE "PEER GYNT"

*Photo by Carl Venth.*

borg in Denmark during the summer of 1875. Unfortunately I was not able to decide myself at what points the music was to be introduced and how long each number should be. All that was determined by the Swedish theatrical director Josephson, at that time chef of the Christiania Theatre. I was thus compelled to do real patch-work. In no case did I have an opportunity to say all I wanted to say. Hence the brevity of these pieces. The performance of the music by the very inadequate (*bescheidene*) forces of that time was anything but good. I did not hear the first performance as I was living at that time in Bergen. But I was told that the orchestral effects were not well brought out (dass die Klangwirkung sehr mittelmässig war). It was really not till the last years in the eighties, after the numbers printed as suited by C. F. Peters had appeared, that the music won its chief success. In the new National Theatre in Christiania Ibsen's inspired work was taken into the repertory again a few years ago, and it always draws a full house. The music, which is played by the new orchestra, under the direction of our excellent conductor, Johan Halvorsen, now goes well, and as executed at present contributes materially to the success. If you had

an opportunity to attend one of these representations you would discover that it requires the stage performance to clearly bring out the musical intentions. It is greatly to be regretted that the local colouring and the philosophical tone of much of the dialogue present a great obstacle to the success of Ibsen's work outside of Scandinavia. In Paris, where it was staged a few years ago, the music (played by the Lamoureux orchestra) had a colossal success, but Ibsen was not understood. In Berlin, last year, the work was simply a failure. And yet I hold it to be Ibsen's greatest creation.[1] In the Fatherland it will always be considered a monument to him and keep its place on the stage even as a folk-play (*Volksstück*)."

[1] In the preface to his translation of "Peer Gynt" (Reclam edition), L. Passarge says: "In Norway this poem is generally considered its author's most important work."

National Theatre, Christiania
Where "Peer Gynt" was produced.
*Photo by Carl Venth.*

## CHAPTER VI

### Grieg at Home — Personal Traits — Anecdotes

SOME months after "Peer Gynt" had its first hearing, Grieg again made Christiania his home. But the country always had a greater charm for him than any city, and from the spring of 1877 we find him domiciled for several years at the picturesque Lofthus, about half-way between Eide and Odde on the branch of the Hardanger Fjord known as the Sörfjord or South Fjord, which is doubly starred in Baedeker and of which this description is given: "The lofty rocky banks, from which a number of waterfalls descend, show that this fjord is of the nature of a huge chasm between the snow-clad Folgefond and the central Norwegian mountains to which it belongs. At places, particularly at the mouths of the torrents, alluvial deposits have formed fertile patches of land, where cherries and apples thrive luxuriantly, especially near the centre and northern parts of the fjord, where it is never frozen over. The banks are there-

fore comparatively well peopled, and the great charm of this fjord lies in the contrast between the smiling hamlets and the wild fjeld (mountains) towering above them."

Of Lofthus itself we get a pleasant glimpse in Sara Bull's biography of Ole Bull:

"The summer of 1879 was one of the happiest ever spent by the artist in Norway. One memorable day was when a party of friends went down to the little hamlet of Lofthus, in the Hardanger, to be immortalised, as Ole Bull told the peasants, because the composer Grieg had chosen to stay there for months and to write some of his best works. They had now come to celebrate his birthday. No spot could be more enchanting, so wonderfully blended were the beautiful and the sublime in nature. The little study of one room, erected by the composer for perfect retirement, was perched half-way up a rock and near the fjord. In the field above, the apple trees were in bloom about an old farmhouse, where the guests assembled. From the summit of the beetling cliffs not far away fell a beautiful waterfall, while the opposite mountain shore of the broad fjord, clothed with heavy forests of pine above and the feathery birch below, presented range after range of lofty peaks and

PEASANTS MOVING GRIEG'S MUSIC-HOUSE
By William Peters.

domes, crowned by the great Folgefond with its eternal snow. The day was as perfect as friendship, music, and lovely surroundings could make it."

Vivid glimpses of Grieg's activity at this stage in his career are given by the well-known artist, William Peters, in the *Century Magazine* for November, 1907. It was he who had helped the composer to find a temporary home in that garden spot of western Norway, the bewitching Hardanger Fjord, and he stayed with him through summer and winter studying Icelandic sagas while Grieg was composing.

The two friends had found good quarters in the village at Ullensvang, and, says Mr. Peters, "on the most suitable — that is, the most inaccessible — spot, where nobody could come and listen, Grieg built his studio. Not only was there no road to the house, but from his place at the piano Grieg could see, like Odin from Lidskjalf, whenever anybody tried to approach from afar. I was chosen architect and superintendent of building, an easy enough task, because the house was nothing but a square wooden box big enough for a piano, a fireplace and the master himself."

Grieg could not stand having anybody listening to him when he was playing and composing; "if

he noticed an auditor he immediately shut the piano, and ceased to work. His wife was his inspiration as well as his best interpreter; for no one can sing his songs as she does. I believe that during their long married life — they were both about twenty when they married — they were never a day without each other's company; but even with her in the room he could not work. In Christiania he found a work-room in a piano factory, where they were tuning pianos all about him. But a steady noise like that did not annoy him."

A favourite diversion during the Lofthus summer was fishing on grey days. "We would put on our fishing togs and sit for hours in a small boat, hauling in fish while the mist made fantastic caps and hoods for the mountain peaks, and a musical quiet reigned undisturbed except for the jovial song of a bird or two, while the far-away waterfalls furnished the tuneful undertone."

During the winter on stormy days, "when the wind shook our house, rattling doors and windows like spirits playing an immense orchestra, Grieg sat in a corner listening. I have known composers who, in writing a little song, would use up a cartload of paper. Not so with Grieg: he would use only a single sheet. He wrote his music with a

PEASANTS LISTENING TO GRIEG'S MUSIC
By William Peters.

lead-pencil, rubbed out, and substituted and changed again, until he was satisfied. Then he wrote it over in ink, and sent to the publisher the same sheet with which he began."

In the course of that winter Grieg wrote several of his quartets for male voices, among other things, and, Mr. Peters continues, "we often had people of the country around come and sing old popular ballads for him."

On one important occasion the peasants were assembled for another purpose. Grieg's little house was finely located, but, being near the road, it was too much exposed to curious sight-seers. So the two men tried to find a better place for it, and finally discovered one near the sea, between rocks and trees. Then they concluded to move the little box of a house in the American way, and called for a house-moving "bee." The neighbours came in numbers and set to work. The rest must be told in Mr. Peters's own words:

"Big logs were placed under the house, and as it began to move, all the children cheered and waved their flags. But Mrs. Grieg came very near being in tears and all of us felt a certain pang at seeing this house, which had gained a very high place in our feelings, moved by rough and, as it seemed to

us, indelicate hands. The house had to be taken up to the highway and from there down to the fjord, and at every ten paces there was a stop in the work, filled in with cakes and drinks, laughable stories and witty remarks. The way down to the final stopping-place passed through some woodland, and trees had to be cut and stones broken up, until at last the job was done, and there the little house stood amid big boulders and green trees. The house itself seemed to like the place, it gave such a bright reflection in the water. The piano was soon in its place, and Grieg started a 'Halling,' while the people danced and threw pine-cones at one another. But soon he struck a minor tune and the melancholy strains of his own music sounded over the water, while the peasants sat down around the house, looking at the far-away blue mountains, every one putting his own dream thoughts into the master's music, and when he stopped there was not a dry eye."

Thus was the "tune house" moved; yet even this spot was not sufficiently secluded. When it became known that Grieg had his "compository" there, people began to row in and listen — a thing which, as we have seen — he could not endure. So, in 1885, he gave up this spot also and, taking

GRIEG WALKING TO HIS MUSIC-HOUSE
By William Peters.

the "tune house" with him as a studio, he built the elegant villa Troldhaugen,[1] which was his home ever after. It was much less accessible to inquisitive tourists than Lofthus, being located some distance from the station of Hop, eight kilometres from Bergen.

If was here that I had the first and only opportunity of meeting the great composer. It was on July 6, 1901, that we saw him. My wife's account of this visit, given in a letter home, being better than any I could write, follows:

"Yesterday we went to see Grieg and his charming wife, and had a most delightful little visit of about three hours. It seems to be our fate to have difficulties in finding people, for yesterday the hotel porter sent us off on a train an hour later than Grieg had telephoned, and made us get off at the wrong station. We were twenty minutes late on a half-hour run. When we reached Nestun (we should have got off at Hop) there was no one at the station who could tell us where Grieg lived, or at least nobody who understood us; when presently two young ladies, Norwegian girls with pleasant faces, asked us in excellent English if they could do anything for us. They told us we could easily

[1] Trold means Kobold (sprite); haug means hill.

walk to Grieg's house from that station, if we could find a boy to show us the way. One of them actually went in search of a boy. None could be found, however, so, as the train was ready to return, we decided to go back as far as Hop (pronounced Hope). There the station-master spoke English, and sent us to Grieg's under the sole care of his sturdy boy of six, who walked and skipped up hill so fast (though he never missed the strawberries on the way) that I could hardly keep pace with him. He received a crown for his services, and left us at the gate with vociferous directions, in Norwegian, about the way to the door, I think, for he evidently suspected we had designs on the kitchen entrance, where a very neat maid, in national dress, answered 'Ja' to Henry's question as to the house being Grieg's.

"We had a glimpse of a pretty garden plot of roses, Iceland poppies, and other flowers, before we entered the glass-enclosed verandah, to be greeted by Mme. Grieg, who immediately won our hearts by her appearance and charm of manner. She is short and somewhat broad, with a face that her photographs do not do justice to, because there is a peculiar mixture of shyness and vivacity that eludes the camera; she has grey hair, cut short, and

A Room in Grieg's House at Troldhaugen

*From a photograph by Otto Borgen, Bergen.*

very intelligent dark blue eyes. She received us with a fascinating smile and great cordiality, and told us Grieg would soon be in. When he arrived, poor man, he could scarcely speak, as he was suffering from an asthmatic attack, but that soon wore off, and he and Henry chatted away in German like two old friends. He speaks English some, but not so much as his wife, who speaks it well, although she says she doesn't. Her sister, who resembles her quite strongly, makes up the rest of the household. Grieg calls her his 'second wife,' and I could see they were a most united family. He is short and frail looking. His back is somewhat bent, from asthma, I suppose, and he has such delicate, nervous, thin little hands, so bloodless, that they worried me until he touched the piano, when I saw that appearances were deceptive. They are wonderful hands, and his touch has the luscious quality of Paderewski's, more than any other pianist we have heard. Like his friend Björnson, he takes a good picture; we would have recognised him instantly had we met him in a crowd. His face is as individual, as unique, as attractive, as his music; it is the face of a thinker, a genius. His eyes are keen and blue; his hair is long, straight, and almost white, and brushed over backwards, like Liszt's.

"It seems to us that the neighbourhood of Bergen is not at all the place for him to live, for it rains a great deal here, and it is usually either damp and cold or damp and warm — a bad thing for one who is not robust. Norway presents curious climatic contrasts, even in places not very far apart, like Bergen and Christiania. Our guide-book says regarding Bergen that the climate is exceedingly mild and humid, resembling that of the west coast of Scotland. The frosts of winter are usually slight and of short duration, the thermometer very rarely falling below 15–20° Fahr., and the average rainfall is 72 inches (in the Nordfjord about 35 inches, at Christiania 26 inches only). There are good reasons, to be sure, why the Griegs should be attached to their villa. It is beautifully situated on an inner branch of the fjord, which here looks like a lake, and has several islands dotting its surface. It must be lovely here in sunny weather — yesterday it was persistently cloudy — but depressing, I should think, the rest of the time, especially in the long dark winters. Henry urged him to move to a dryer spot, and he replied that he had long thought he would go and live in the mountains near Christiania; that he had just about decided to do so, in fact.

View of Grieg's House at Troldhaugen

Troldhaugen, Showing Grieg's House

"They were astonished to hear how long we had been married, so I thought it might interest them if I told them my age. That pleased Grieg. He said he liked the way American women had of not objecting to telling their age. We took supper with them, and then, after a little while, he played and she sang, but 'not for the critic' he told Henry, for his wife doesn't sing any more except at home. Some years ago she did much to make his songs famous. Her voice is no longer fresh and young, but one forgets that in the magic of her singing, it is so wonderfully shaded and phrased, so full of feeling and sympathy. It fairly made the chills run over me. She sings the pathetic songs beautifully, but still better are the dramatic ones, or those which are gay and full of the 'national colour,' although what is usually called so is really his own interpretation of his land, not anything he gets from others.

"In many ways Edvard Grieg reminded us of *our* Edward [MacDowell]. Like him, he has his little work cabin away from the house, down a steep path, and among the trees in the garden. Some manuscripts were lying on the table, and Grieg talked with Henry about his work, and Wagner, and Bayreuth, and Liszt, and many

other topics. Among other things, he spoke of the losses which he and Ibsen and other Norwegians suffered because Norway did not enjoy the benefits of the international copyright law. From France, however, he had had some income since he joined the Society of Dramatic Authors, which collects fees for public performances; at the end of the year he was surprised on receiving a cheque for 1200 francs. Both the Griegs had many questions to ask about America and Americans, especially the MacDowells, to whom they sent the kindest messages.

"When we left them, at about ten, it was still very light. They laughed when I said I always thought it was four o'clock, the sun misled me so about time. We were glad that we had not reached them by an earlier train, for three hours of talking must have been quite enough for Grieg, and if we had been there longer he might have had reason to regret our visit. He said good-by to us at the door, while she and her sister went as far as the gate with us. I told her how well we knew and loved her husband's songs and piano pieces, and how often we played and sang them. He will probably never come to America, although he has had many tempting offers. His health would not

VILLA TROLDHAUGEN AND GRIEG'S STUDIO

permit. He dislikes even the trip to England, so wretched is he on the sea. He told us he could stand the sea-sickness for a day, but not for a week or more. Bergen is really dreadfully out of the world, for either you have to take the disagreeable journey by sea, or the long one we took overland by wagon.

"I must add a few words about the supper we had, a real Norwegian supper of delicious little fried cod, smoked tongue, peas, cold things, and cheese, wine and beer. Grieg takes tea, as he said, 'weak at night, for I must have some sleep, but strong in the morning.' The maid served things once, while Madame Grieg looked after everything afterwards, jumping up to get things, and acting so glad when we enjoyed her little cods. Grieg made me smell a cheese, a favourite national dish, which he said tasted good but smelled very bad. I didn't find it so, but thought it tasted like dried condensed milk. We were speaking of national food peculiarities, and I said in America we didn't have time to learn to eat and like good things. Grieg seemed very much amused at this, repeating it and saying 'That's good!'

"He told us some interesting things about the first Bayreuth Festival. Hans Richter refused him

permission to sit in the orchestra at rehearsals, but in such a way that Grieg said: 'What if I should come without permission?' 'Oh, of course, I couldn't help that,' retorted Richter; so he attended, and Richter afterwards told him he was glad he had come. At the final rehearsal for the 'Ring,' Grieg said it was droll to hear Wagner with a stentorian tone like Fafner give the signal for everything to begin — for his life's dream to unfold. The King of Bavaria was there, and Grieg and others had been admitted on condition that they would sit in the dark, still as mice, and not make any disturbance trying to see the King; but when they heard a noise they did get up, whereat Wagner came to the edge of his box and scolded them all roundly. But they all made allowances, for Wagner was naturally nervous and overwrought."

A vivid glimpse of Troldhaugen we owe to a writer in *Le Ménestrel:*

"About a half-hour's ride by rail from Bergen, in the heart of the mountains, on the borders of a little lake, is a charming domain that Grieg purchased from a peasant, some twenty years ago. The surroundings breathe calm and peace, and as the residents of the country remark, everything seems to sing *Solvejg's Song.* At the entrance to

TROLDHAUGEN

the estate is a post fastened in the ground, bearing this inscription: 'Edvard Grieg onsker at väre uforstyrrd til klokken 4 Eftermiddag,' which means: 'Edvard Grieg does not desire to receive callers earlier than four o'clock in the afternoon.'

"The house is of stone, solidly built, and with a glass peristyle in front: On the left side, the building, rectangular in shape, rises, and thus forms a terrace, surmounted by a flagpole. This terrace forms an observatory, from which one may view the surrounding country for a considerable distance, and study the stars during the beautiful northern nights. Not far from the main building, at the end of a pathway bordered by trees, is a tiny cottage, or rather a sort of log-cabin, whose sole furniture consists of a piano. In this retreat the master loved to pass the morning, and the early afternoon hours, thinking and composing in the midst of a complete and absolute solitude. In the surrounding trees many nightingales make their nests, and often charmed the artist with their beautiful song."

To the eminent American composer and conductor, Mr. Frank Van der Stucken, I am indebted for the following interesting reminiscences of Grieg, written especially for this volume. They are the more valuable as so little regarding the great Nor-

wegian's personality has got into print, notwithstanding the universal interest in his works; a fact due partly to his retiring disposition, partly to the remoteness of his residence:[1]

"When I first came to Leipsic, in 1878, my whole musical luggage consisted of a set of songs published that year. As a stranger in a strange country, my only method to get some recognition was to send complimentary copies to the musical periodicals and to the prominent musicians who lived in Leipsic at that time. One morning, after breakfast, I was sitting in my lonesome den in the Post-strasse at work on a new song, when a rap at the door announced my first visitor: and presently a little gentleman, with flowing blonde locks, with friendly and bright blue eyes, walked towards me and introduced himself as the Norwegian composer Grieg who wanted to make the acquaintance of the young musician, whose first compositions he had received and read with great interest. Ever since that hour

[1] Mr. Van der Stucken was born in Texas in 1858. He received his musical education at Antwerp and in German cities, including Weimar, where Liszt at once recognised his gifts as composer. In 1884 he became conductor of the Arion in New York; since 1895 he has been at the head of the orchestra and Conservatory at Cincinnati. Besides songs and pianoforte pieces he has written an opera, "Vlasda," music to "The Tempest," a "Ratcliff" overture, a "Te Deum," and other vocal and orchestral works. His compositions are characterised by the same lively temperament that makes him so interesting as a conductor.

our friendship was sealed, and scarcely a day passed during Grieg's stay in Leipsic that we were not found together, either at dinner, supper, or some musical or dramatic performance. Through him I was introduced to the artistic life of Leipsic, and more especially to his Scandinavian friends, Sinding, Kajanus, Holter, Olsen, and others. Grieg was fond of cards, and after lunch we used to spend one hour at the Café Français playing whist. He was a very lively comrade in good company, and liked to tell and to hear a good square jest; but when we were alone, the keynote of his character was a gentle melancholy resignation, tempered by witty satire and weird phantasy. He was rather a 'gourmet,' and even a 'gourmand.' A fine portion of oysters, caviare, or Norwegian snow-hen, with a glass of good old wine, could excite and cheer him up wonderfully.[1] One day we lingered before the shop window of a renowned *delicatessen* store, when he — armed with his inseparable gloves, umbrella, and galoshes — exclaimed, enthusiastically: 'What an ideal symphony! How perfect in all its details, in form, contents, and instrumentation!'

[1] In his letters to his Dutch friend Julius Röntgen there are many references to the delights of oyster eating in Holland. Once he declares he could write nine sheets in praise of these oysters. (H. T. F.)

"His favourite modern composers were, then, Chopin, Schumann, and Wagner. He also spoke in the highest terms about his countrymen, the composers Svendsen and Nordraak, and the celebrated authors, Ibsen and Björnson, the friends of his youth and manhood, who had such a decisive influence on his career. In music as in literature, Grieg also had a great penchant for the French masters, because they express so clearly whatever they have to say. He always was a Republican at heart, and spoke about Norway's absolute independence as long as I knew him — citing Björnson as sharing his opinions.[1] I am sure that he now rejoices greatly about the present turn of affairs in Scandinavia.

"With all that, he liked and was liked by the Danish royal family. Princess Thyra, one of King Christian's daughters, invited him several times to play the piano for and with her. At a time when Grieg concertised in several German towns, he was invited by the reigning duke of a smaller State to visit him. In the course of the conversation the

[1] The eminent Danish author, Georg Brandes, remarks, in a private letter to the writer of this volume: "I have had some personal acquaintance with Grieg, and have talked with him on several occasions, but our conversations were not about music, but about political and national topics. You know that he is an ardent Norwegian. He has always stood by the left; during the Dreyfus affair he refused to play in France."

duke presented Grieg with a badge of one of the orders. The composer simply said 'Thank you,' and, continuing the conversation where it had been left off, proceeded quietly to put the decoration in one of the rear pockets of his dress coat. The duchess, who was present, saved the somewhat awkward situation with great tact. She came to Grieg and smilingly said, 'My dear Mr. Grieg, let me show you how such a badge should be worn,' and fastened the decoration with her own hands on the lapel of his coat.

"In reference to the Danish Court, Grieg liked to tell a story about his countryman, Ole Bull. The handsome violinist had just returned from a triumphal tour in Spain, where the impressionable Queen Isabella had favoured him with her good graces and the badge of her order pour la vertu. Piquant reports had reached Stockholm, and when Ole Bull shortly afterwards played at a Court concert, the Queen Desideria asked him, with a roguish twinkle in her eye, on what account Queen Isabella had given him his new decoration. The *virtuoso* made a graceful bow, and modestly answered, 'On account of my virtue, your highness!'

"Grieg's piano concerto in A minor proved to be the means to gain Liszt's protection. While

Liszt admired the originality of the music, he suggested several alterations in the instrumentation. The composer, who at that time was rather doubtful about his orchestral knowledge, accepted these suggestions, and the score was published accordingly. But on this occasion Liszt had made the mistake of following his own fiery temperament instead of considering Grieg's more idyllic nature, and so the scoring turned out to be too heavy for its poetical contents. Later on Grieg published a revised edition of the concerto, in which he partly reverted to his first simpler and more appropriate scoring. A single example shows plainly the difference of the two versions; the beautiful second theme of the first movement was given by Grieg to the 'cellos, quite in keeping with the tender *cantabile* character of the melody; Liszt suggested the trumpet, and at once introduced a theatrical tinge that never existed in Grieg's make-up. For many a day the manuscript of this concerto had remained in the hands of Carl Reinecke, for Grieg wanted to know his former teacher's opinion of his work. After waiting in vain for a note on the subject, he called on Reinecke to get the score, and was received most cordially. The conversation touched all possible topics, but the concerto was

*never mentioned.* So the Norwegian walked home with the score under his arm and some fierce motive in his raging soul. Grieg, like Wagner, was very sensitive to adverse criticism, and I remember his highly-coloured expressions about some musical journalists of the day.

"In the summer of 1883, Grieg came to live near me in Rudolstadt, a beautiful town in Thuringia. He expected to go to Paris in the winter, and I was to help him to master the French language. It was a most delightful period in our lives. He lived in a very 'gemüthliches' out-of-town hotel, while I had rented a modest villa belonging to the same concern for my small family. In the morning we worked separately at our own affairs, and in the afternoon I ordinarily met him in the Morla Graben, a beautiful vale near by. There I often found him lying on his back in the shade of a tree, dreamingly gazing at the sky, while his hand reposed on the grass, holding an open French book. Our French lessons never lasted very long, for they invariably passed into musical discussions. After supper we walked about town or country, with my wife and child. He was very fond of my little daughter Grety, and 'Uncle' Grieg was quite a favourite of hers. He liked children very much,

and used to speak about a child of his, a girl that had died very young. How tenderly he would mention her name and relate incidents of her short life! In Rudolstadt I translated several of Grieg's songs, and 'At the Cloister Gate' into French, and added a second German verse to the celebrated song 'Ich liebe dich,' for Peters in Leipsic.

"On Grieg's instigation I visited Liszt in Weimar, and thus owe him all my subsequent career, for a concert of my own compositions given under Liszt's auspices in November 1883 called the attention of the press to my name. Grieg was present at my concert, and we also met at two interesting entertainments given by Liszt, who was very kind to me during my stay in Weimar.

"As a performer, Grieg is the most original pianist I ever heard. Though his technique suffered somewhat from the fact that a heavy wagon crushed one of his hands and that he lost the use of one of his lungs in his younger days, he has a way of performing his compositions that is simply unique. While it lacks the breadth that the professional virtuoso infuses in his works, he offsets this by a most poetic conception of lyric parts and a wonderfully crisp and buoyant execution of the rhythmical passages. I heard him play the concerto and the

different violin sonatas. Of the latter he seems to like the second (opus 13) the best. I also heard him perform his 'Ballade' in G minor, a composition that he wrote with his 'heart's blood in days of sadness and despair.' There is no doubt that this beautiful composition is his favourite work, and I believe that all deeper-minded musicians agree with him.

"As a conductor, he manages to get out of any orchestra what he wants for a good presentation of his works. Before his appearance as performer or conductor he used to be rather nervous and concerned about the results. When he came to see me at my lodgings in Weimar on the evening of my concert and noticed that I was gaily humming a tune while I dressed for the ordeal, he turned to Mrs. van der Stucken and said: 'How can any one be so calm at such a time? I would give anything to have such a disposition.'"

So far Mr. Van der Stucken. Of Grieg's agitation about a concert, just hinted at, Ernest Closson gives a vivid illustration in his brochure.[1] "He put into his playing so much soul, so much emotional intensity, that he came back into the artists' room

[1] "Edvard Grieg et la Musique Scandinave." Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1892. P. 32.

completely exhausted. The illness which weakens his strength makes it impossible for him to endure the fatiguing tasks of virtuososhiip, especially that of giving a whole concert without assisting artists. The depression he felt brought on an extraordinary state of nervous excitement, and he paced the room feverishly, paying no further attention to anything going on about him, merely fixing, from time to time, on one or another, his childlike gaze, gentle and kind, in which one could read something like anguish. And in a feeble voice he kept repeating feverishly, in German, the words: 'No! A whole concert! It is too much — too much — I cannot! — I cannot!'"

In his pen-and-ink portrait of Grieg the same writer refers particularly to his eyes — "eyes superb, green, grey, in which one seems to catch a glimpse of Norway, its melancholy fjords and its luminous mists. His gaze is serious, indescribably tender, with a peculiar expression, at once ailing, restless, and childishly naïve. The entire effect is that of kindness, gentleness, sincerity, and genuine modesty. . . . He has remained what he always was — a man who detests clamour, abhors the hubbub of ovations, the triumphs of vogue and celebrity."

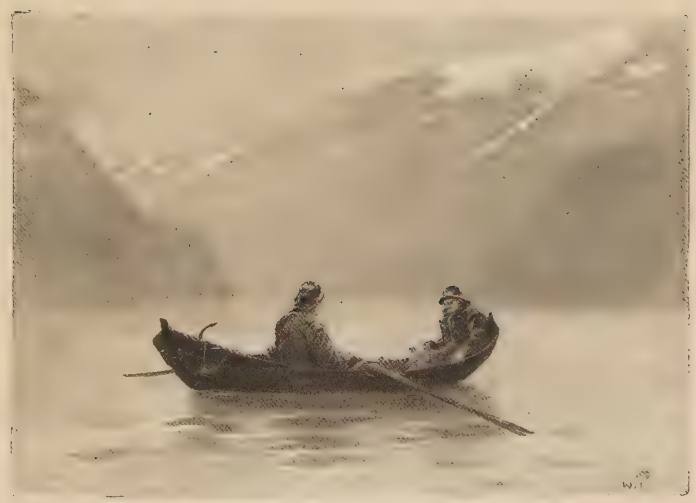
When Tchaikovsky first met Grieg he wrote [1] that even before he knew who he was, his exterior at once attracted his sympathy: "he had an uncommon charm, and blue eyes, not very large, but irresistibly fascinating, recalling the glance of a charming and candid child. I rejoiced in the depths of my heart when we were mutually introduced to each other, and it turned out that this personality, which was so inexplicably sympathetic to me, belonged to a musician whose warmly emotional music had long ago won my heart." He concludes his remarks on Grieg and his music with the exclamation that "it is not surprising that every one should delight in Grieg, that he should be popular everywhere — in Paris, London, and Moscow — that his name should appear in all concert programmes, and that visitors to Bergen should deem it a pleasant duty to make a pilgrimage to the charming though remote haven among the rocks of the shore where Grieg retires to work and where he spends most of his life."

To Mr. Christian Schiött I am indebted for the following amusing anecdote. One day, at Bergen, Grieg went out fishing in a small boat with his

[1] "Diary of My Tour in 1888," embodied in Rosa Newmarch's "Tchaikovsky, His Life and Works." John Lane, 1900. Pp. 191–193.

friend Frants Beyer. After a while a musical theme suddenly came into his head. He took a piece of paper from his pocket, quietly jotted it down, and put the paper on the bench at his side. A moment later a gust of wind blew it overboard. Grieg did not see it, but Beyer saw it and picked it up. Being himself something of a composer he read the melody and, after putting the paper in his pocket, whistled it. Grieg turned like a flash and asked: "What was that?" Beyer answered nonchalantly, "only an idea I just got," whereupon Grieg retorted: "The devil you say! I just got that same idea myself!"

One of the anecdotes related by Mr. Van der Stucken illustrates Grieg's indifference to badges and orders. He received many of these, but never wore any of them. He was proud, on the other hand, of the honours conferred on him by institutions of art and learning, and he was particularly pleased when, on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, his bust was placed in the hall at Leipsic where the famous Gewandhaus concerts are given. In 1872 he was appointed a member of the Swedish Academy of Music; in 1883, corresponding member of the Musical Academy at Leyden; in 1890, of the French Academy of Fine Arts. In 1893 the



Grieg Fishing on the Hardanger Fjord
By William Peters.

University of Cambridge conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Music. The occasion was a most interesting one, for Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saëns, Max Bruch, and Boïto also had degrees conferred on them on the same date, and assisted at the musical performances. Unfortunately, Grieg's state of health did not allow him to be present; but on the tenth of May, 1894, he was in Cambridge to receive his degree. In the same month, two years later, Oxford also bestowed the honorary degree of Doctor of Music on the composer who, as one writer has said, was "the most popular musician in the home life of England since Mendelssohn."

While he valued such expressions of esteem, he never changed his attitude toward badges and orders; unlike his friend Björnson, however, he accepted these because he considered it discourteous to refuse them. In a letter (dated February 4, 1896) to his friend Oscar Meyer, the song writer, he remarked wittily: "I thank you most kindly for your congratulations. My election as a member of the French Legion of Honour is, however, an 'honour' I share with 'legions,' so let us not waste more words about it."

To Julius Röntgen he once wrote that he found

the summer an unfavourable time for composing, because of the number of visitors who took up his time. He disliked making new acquaintances, but became warmly attached to those he found congenial. The most intimate of all his friends was Frants Beyer, who lived across the fjord at Naesset; their rowboats were in daily requisition during the summer for mutual calls, and they often climbed the mountains together. Another very intimate friend was Röntgen, who also often went with him on excursions by land or water. On one occasion, he relates, "Grieg invited a player of the Hardanger fiddle to go along. He performed his tunes for us during the picturesque trip. How this music harmonized with the surrounding scenery! — one felt that the one had sprung from the other. Grieg listened delightedly, marking the rhythm with his head, and holding in his hand a cup filled with port wine which every now and then he offered to the *spielmann* with a 'skål.' 'This is Norway,' he exclaimed, and his eyes sparkled."

Another mountain sketch from Röntgen's "Reminiscences" may be cited as a sample of the good things in that book:

"Beside Ole Berger's hut there were two säter, in which the dairymaids lived. On the very first

evening we visited them and after some resistance they were persuaded by Frants Beyer to sing. For the first time I heard Norwegian folk songs at their source. And how effective they were there! Frants Beyer told us how, in the morning, when the cows were being milked and the dairymaids sang as they milked, he had put his paper on one of the animals and thus got his songs 'fresh from the cow.'" Grieg also was busy taking notes, and Röntgen subsequently found among his papers a number of jottings, which he has reproduced.

This was in the Jotunheim district. On these excursions Grieg walked as far as he could and then got onto his horse. The mountain air coming direct from the snow peaks and glaciers exhilarated him like wine. "Who never saw Grieg in the mountain wilderness did not know him," exclaims Röntgen: "It was there only that his genial character, unmolested by bodily sufferings, found its full expression."

It was not often that Grieg was thus unmolested by bodily sufferings. At times, like Heine, he joked at them; at others they rendered him querulous and petulant. He had faults, too, that were not the excusable result of illness, among them a striking lack of discretion and diplomatic tact.

A Scandinavian friend who knew the Griegs well writes to me that, like Björnson, Grieg was "exceedingly headstrong — which, indeed, is a prominent Norwegian characteristic. Mrs. Grieg's gentle feminine diplomacy often smoothed over the unpleasant impression produced by her husband's somewhat inconsiderate assertiveness. This is putting it mildly, for, great composer and noble, upright man as Grieg certainly was in all essential actions and dealings, his manner, especially his way of expressing opinions, was often little short of insulting. His wife, in the fullest sense of the word, *devoted* herself to him. She is — well, the word saint somehow doesn't seem to fit her, pure and self-sacrificing though she has always been — but she is as near perfection as any woman could possibly be."

Of his lack of diplomacy I have an amusing illustration. The German theorist, Georg Capellen, had written a book in which he devoted a chapter to Grieg, pointing out his great harmonic originality. The same book contains a new theory of harmony somewhat difficult to comprehend. After reading it, I wrote to Grieg asking him what he thought of this book. He answered (July 30, 1905): "Mr. Georg Capellen has written to me.

But I answered him quite frankly just what I am now telling you; that I lack entirely the scientific knowledge qualifying me to pass judgment on his work. I expressed myself as amiably and politely as I could. But he has not written me again so that I have every reason to suppose that he regards me as an 'ox.' Well, I must bear that too. As a matter of course I feel that a deep truth lurks in his remarks regarding 'overtones.' Only, I am not able to discuss this matter." [1]

[1] In some of Grieg's letters to me printed in this volume, I have omitted lines in which he criticises persons still living.

## CHAPTER VII

### Conductor and Pianist — Dreyfus Incident — Nina Grieg

DESPITE the drawback of permanently impaired health, Grieg had succeeded by the year 1880 in establishing his fame in all musical cities as a composer, and in many also as a conductor and a pianist. At Bergen, during the seasons of 1880 to 1882, he conducted the "Harmonien." He was interested in these concerts, although his orchestra was, of course, not of the best. Sometimes he visited the members and taught them how to play their parts. With increasing frequency, from this time on, he left his native country to give concerts in England, France, and Germany.

In a letter dated August 30, 1888, Sir George Grove said, in speaking of the Birmingham Festival:[1]

"A very interesting thing was Grieg's overture

[1] "Life and Letters of Sir George Grove," by C. L. Graves. Macmillan, 1903. P. 337. Grieg paid five visits to England, that of 1888 being the first.

last night, and his conducting of it. How he managed to inspire the band as he did and get such nervous thrilling bursts and such charming sentiment out of them I don't know. He looks very like Beethoven in face, I thought, and though he is not so extravagant in his ways of conducting, yet it is not unlike." A week before this date he had written in his pocket-book, under the heading "Beethoven": "Such men cannot be judged by the standard of ordinary men, — of Englishmen particularly. They are free from conventions which bind us, they are all nerves, they indulge in strange gestures and utter odd noises and say strange words, and make every one laugh till we find that the gestures and looks and words are the absolute expression of their inmost feeling, and that that inmost feeling is inherent in the music and must be expressed in the performance. And they get what they want. Those who have seen Grieg conduct will know what I am attempting to describe."

On May 3 of the same year the Philharmonic Society of London devoted nearly its entire programme to Grieg, who was present in the threefold capacity of composer, conductor, and pianist. Concerning his playing of his pianoforte concerto the

*Times* said: "Mr. Grieg played his own concerto in A minor after his own manner. The French speak of a *voix de compositeur;* in the same sense there is a composer's touch on the piano, which, when applied to the composer's own works, gives them a peculiar charm of their own. . . . Grieg's rendering of the familiar work was a revelation, although it would be unjust to forget that Mr. Edward Dannreuther, who introduced the concerto many years ago, invested it with the rarest poetic charm. . . . The concerto is one of the most beautiful specimens of its kind. . . . The dreamy charm of the opening movement, the long-drawn sweetness of the adagio, reminding one of Tennyson's 'Dark and true and tender is the North,' the graceful fairy music of the final allegro — all this went straight to the hearts of the audience. Grieg, at least, will have no reason to complain of the passive attitude toward modern music generally attributed to English, and more especially Philharmonic audiences."

The *Musical Times* said concerning the same performance: "Nothing could be more neat, clear, and intelligent than his rendering of the solo. In it the artist predominated over the mere executant, and the audience were held closely observant by

Mr. and Mrs. Grieg, London, 1888

what seemed to be, in Grieg's hands, a new work. The success gained was immense, while its causes were the most legitimate conceivable. Grieg, as a conductor, gave equal satisfaction. The little pieces styled 'Elegiac Melodies' acquired a significance under his direction such as had not been suspected previously, and the performance — a triumph of delicacy and refinement — left absolutely nothing to desire. Of the applause showered upon the Norwegian musician it would be vain to speak in attempt at description. Grieg, though personally a stranger, seemed intimately known to the audience, and appeared to have all their sympathy. This was no doubt due to the charm of the songs and pianoforte pieces which long since made his name a household word. It is now to be hoped that the greatest musical representative of 'old Norway' will come amongst us every year."

He did return the following year, when he again appeared at a Philharmonic concert (March 14, 1889). Concerning this, the same periodical remarks: "The hero of the evening was unquestionably Mr. Grieg, the heroine being Mr. Grieg's wife, who sang, in her own unique and most artistic fashion, a selection from her husband's songs, he

accompanying with such delicacy and poetic feeling as drew almost an unfair measure of attention to the pianoforte. The Norwegian master further conducted a performance of his suite in four movements, made up from incidental music to Ibsen's 'Peer Gynt,' and called by the name of that drama. Amateurs will have in mind that this suite was introduced at the London Symphony Concerts last November, but then heard under the disadvantage of no key to the meaning of the music and apart from the composer's supervision. Under Mr. Grieg's direction, helped by general knowledge of the dramatic significance of the various numbers, the work appeared at its best, making a genuine 'sensation.' The performance was most masterly, the splendid Philharmonic orchestra seconding the composer conductor to a marvel. No more striking and picturesque effects have been produced in our concert-rooms for a long time."

How completely Grieg won the hearts of English music-lovers is indicated by the following, which I find among my newspaper clippings, undated: "Grieg is so popular in London, both as composer and pianist, that when he gave his last concert people were waiting in the street before the doors

from eleven o'clock in the morning, quite as in the old Rubinstein days." [1]

In Paris he enjoyed the same favour. As the eminent composer, Gabriel Fauré, wrote in *Le Figaro* (1893):

"Among the most famous living musicians there is none I know of whose popularity equals, with us, that of M. Grieg; none whose works have entered into our inmost musical life in the same degree as have his compositions, which are so full of simple charm, so fine, strange, ever individual, and, for the most part, of a comparative ease of execution which makes them accessible to the lesser talents, and has greatly aided their coming into vogue."

It was in Paris that the most exciting episode in Grieg's life occurred. At the time of the Dreyfus trial it happened that the eminent orchestral conductor, Edouard Colonne, invited him to participate in a concert at the Châtelet Theatre. Grieg,

[1] A vote as to popular pieces, taken in connection with a series of concerts in Glasgow some years ago, yielded the highest number of ballots for Tchaikovsky's "Pathetic Symphony"; next came Schubert's "Unfinished," then Beethoven's "Pastoral," Grieg's "Peer Gynt" suite, and Beethoven's C minor symphony. In 1897 Grieg gave ten concerts in England, to crowded houses. After the tenth, a critic wrote that a serious composer ought not to write a thing like the Norwegian Bridal Procession (op. 19), whereupon Grieg wrote to his friend Röntgen: "Da hört sich doch alles auf" — "did you ever hear of such a funny thing?"

however, like many other patriots the world over, was so indignant at the verdict in this case that he refused the invitation, in a letter which got into print, and which enraged the nationalists. The letter, dated Aulestad, near Christiania, September 12, 1899, is herewith given in an English version:

"Dear Master,

"While thanking you very much for your kind invitation, I regret to say that after the issue of the Dreyfus trial I cannot make up my mind, at this moment, to come to France. Like all who are not French (*tout l'étranger*) I am indignant at the contempt for justice shown in your country, and therefore unable to enter into relations with the French public. Pardon me if I cannot feel differently, and I beg you to try to understand me. My wife and I send you our best remembrance."

In reply to this letter M. Colonne wrote, under date of September 30:

"My dear Master,

"The letter you addressed to me under the sway of emotion on the day after the trial at Rennes has certainly outstripped your thoughts. No, my dear Master, France has not ceased to be the land of liberty, justice, and right. With us, as elsewhere, political and religious feelings are strong; they often poison or turn aside commonweal questions. But these are transient crises, after which we recover ourselves always, and become again, what the world has become accustomed to see in us, the France of equality and justice, the France of 1789. That, my dear Master, is what you forgot in publishing your letter, and your friends, who are numerous here, hope that you already regret having written it. It is in this hope that I send you, my dear Master, the assurance of my best regards."

Grieg replied to this, under date of October 4, in an autograph French letter:[1]

"My dear Master,

"Allow me to thank you for the charming and noble manner in which you referred to my answer to your kind invitation, and I beg you to be so good as to hear me a few moments more concerning the affair.

"The French translator of my answer to you asked my permission to print it in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. In the indignation of the moment (it was just after the verdict in the trial at Rennes) I consented. There is only one point of view from which I regret this, namely, the thought of having possibly hurt your feelings in neglecting to first get your consent, which would deeply mortify me. But I hope you can readily understand the situation. In writing my answer I was in the country, in the hospitable home of the poet Björnson, whose family, like my wife and myself, are Dreyfusards. In this way, the whole thing followed naturally. I remember having asked the German translator, who was present, 'Do you believe, really that any good will result from the printing of the letter?' and that he and others answered, 'Yes, undoubtedly!'

"I wish I could show you all the abominable letters I receive daily from your country. To me they are solely tokens of a bad conscience, and additional proofs of the innocence of the unhappy Dreyfus. Yesterday I received from M. Henri Rochefort his 'noble' journal, the *Intransigeant*, addressed to the 'Jewish musical composer, Ed. Grieg.' There! I am proud of it! 'Hurrah for Mendelssohn!' One of the letters from Paris threatens 'de me recevoir dans votre ville par coups de pied dans la partie la moins noble de mon

[1] The two preceding letters were printed in *Le Figaro* of October 4, 1899. For authentic copies of them, and for the following letter, which has not yet been printed, I am indebted to the kindness of M. Colonne; also for the programme of the concert of April 19, 1903.

individu' if I dare to come there. However, I believe that the easily aroused passion of the French nation will soon be replaced by a saner attitude, resembling the rights of mankind proclaimed by the République française in 1789. I hope, primarily for France, but also for my own sake, that I may be able once more to see your beautiful country."

This opportunity came in 1903, when Colonne renewed his invitation, and Grieg accepted it. His opponents also saw their opportunity. As soon as his date was announced they began to stir up feeling against him, demanding that "the insulter of France should be shown the door." At the opening hour the concert of the Châtelet Theatre was crowded as it had never been, and hundreds were at the door unable to secure admission. Apparently those inside were all friends, for when Grieg appeared at the conductor's desk he was received with thunders of applause, lasting several minutes. When that subsided, however, the opponents made themselves heard with penny whistles, stamping of the feet, and cries of "Apologise, you have insulted France." While Grieg stood calmly waiting for the tumult to subside, the majority of the audience protested vigorously against the disturbance and renewed the applause. Before it had subsided Grieg gave the sign for the beginning of his overture "In the Autumn." At its conclu-

sion there was an ovation for him, mingled with hisses. Presently a man got up in the parquet and shouted, "We applaud only the artist and great musician." [1]

# CONCERTS-COLONNE

## THEATRE DU CHATELET

**Dimanche 19 Avril 1903, à 2 h. 1/4**
**(Vingt-Quatrième et dernier Concert de l'abonnement)**

SOUS LA DIRECTION DE M.

## EDVARD GRIEG

AVEC LE CONCOURS DE Mme

## ELLEN GULBRANSON

**du Théatre de Bayreuth**

ET DE M.

## RAOUL PUGNO

**EN AUTOMNE,** Ouverture de concert, op. 11 ..... *ED. GRIEG*
(Ire Audition).

**TROIS ROMANCES** avec accompagnement d'orchestre ..... *ED. GRIEG*
*a*) **Berceuse de Solveig** (IBSEN).
*b*) **De Monte-Pincio** (BJÖRNSON).
*c*) **Un Cygne** (IBSEN).
Mme **Ellen GULBRANSON.**

**CONCERTO EN LA MINEUR** pour piano, op. 16 ..... *ED. GRIEG*
I. *Allegro moderato.*
II. *Adagio.*
III. *Allegro, presto, maestoso.*
**M. Raoul PUGNO.**

[1] At this historic concert Frau Gulbranson sang three of Grieg's songs, including "The Swan," which she had to repeat. With the composer at the conductor's desk, Raoul Pugno won a triumphant success with Grieg's concerto, of which he is still the most poetic interpreter. Greatly appreciated also were "At the Cloister Gate" (especially the chorus of nuns), and the "Peer Gynt" selections, conducted by Grieg himself. In a letter to Röntgen, Grieg wrote that before going on the stage he had taken five drops of opium, which had "a remarkably calming effect." Other interesting details are given in Röntgen's Reminiscences.

DEUX MELODIES ELEGIAQUES.....*ED. GRIEG*
**Pour instruments a cordes.**
D'après des poésies norvégiennes de A. O. VINJE.
*a*) **Blessures au cœur.**
*b*) **Dernier printemps.**

A LA PORTE DU CLOITRE (Ire Audition).....*ED. GRIEG*
**Poème de Björnson pour soprano et alto soli.**
**Chœur de femmes, orchestre et orgue** (op. **20**).
Mme **ELLEN GULBRANSON.**
Mlle **CLAMOUS.**
Chœur de Nonnes.

PEER GYNT, Ire **suite d'Orchestre** (Op. **46**).....*ED. GRIEG*
Musique pour le poème dramatique de IBSEN.
I. **Le matin.**
II. **La mort d'Aase.**
III. **La danse d'Anitra.**
IV. **Chez le Roi des Montagnes** (*Les Cobolds poursuivant Peer Gynt*).
**Sous la direction de M. Ed. GRIEG.**

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LE CREPUSCULE DES DIEUX.....*R. WAGNER*
**Scène finale** (*Mort de Brunnhilde*).
Brunnhilde: Mme Ellen **GULBRANSON.**
**Sous la direction de M. L. LAPORTE.**
PIANO PLEYEL.

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**CE PROGRAMME EST DISTRIBUE GRATUITEMENT**
*Prière de ne pas entrer ni sortir pendant l'exécution des morceaux.*

In a private letter, printed by Schjelderup, Grieg referred amusingly to this concert: "I have in my old days succeeded at last in getting hissed. I have seen much, but never such a comedy as that in the Châtelet Theatre on the nineteenth. But, who can tell, if I had not been hissed I would perhaps not have had such an enormous success. The press was furious over this success. Think of it, when I was about to enter my carriage there was a triple cordon around it. I felt myself as important as Cromwell — at the very least."

Referring to an earlier concert given by Grieg in Paris (December 8, 1889), Closson says that his gestures at the conductor's desk were free from

exaggeration, and that he was master of himself as well as of the orchestral players. As a special characteristic he notes "a tendency to make both the arms simultaneously execute the same gesture."

"Doesn't he look like a lion shaking his mane?" a lady was overheard saying during a concert given by Grieg in Vienna in 1896. In January of the following year he again appeared in that city, and the correspondent of the New York *Musical Courier* wrote: "When a student said to a woman who unfortunately missed the Grieg concert last year, 'Well, you missed just half your life!' he uttered more of a truth perhaps than he knew. Grieg is a veritable Orpheus on the piano. To say that he charms is true in every sense of the word . . . there is something supernatural, something ethereal, in his touch and style . . . What enhanced the charm of his playing was that he wisely chose those compositions for his programme which are well-known favourites, most of them from the 'Lyrische Stücke,' Vol. III.; 'In der Heimat'; 'Schmetterling'; 'Einsamer Wanderer'; 'Vöglein'; 'Erotik'; 'An den Frühling,' &c. All of these he played with the utmost delicacy and a rare sympathy of touch of softer, finer quality than has ever been my good fortune to hear. In contrast to this was the

remarkably strong manner in which he brought out all that was 'characteristic' in each selection — that which only the composer knows so much better than any other hand how best to do. I noticed especially the easy clearness of his left-hand work, particularly in melody. I have never heard any one, for instance, play the left-hand response in the 'Erotik' as he did. It gave the whole piece a character which it had never assumed before. Of course there were numerous encores. bravos, cheers *ad infinitum*." [1]

Dr. Hanslick wrote after one of Grieg's concerts in Vienna: "His piano playing is enchantingly tender and elegant, and at the same time entirely individual. He plays like a great composer who is thoroughly at home at the piano, being neither its tyrant nor its slave — not like a travelling virtuoso who also devotes some attention to composing. His technic is at the same time flawless, well-groomed, and smooth. Grieg need not fear to enter the lists against many a virtuoso; but he contents himself with the finished execution of lyrical pieces, and dispenses with capering battle-horses."

[1] After this another concert was given at which Busoni played the A minor concerto, and Grieg conducted the "Autumn" overture, the "Holberg" suite, and "At the Cloister Gate."

When I heard Grieg at Troldhaugen I admired at first the beauty of his tone and the eloquence of his pianistic accents. Then I forgot that he was playing and heard only the music. It is with playing as with acting: the greatest actor is he who makes us forget himself and see only the character he impersonates.

The climax of enthusiasm over Grieg as a player, conductor, and composer was naturally reached in the Scandinavian cities. At Stockholm, for instance, in the spring of 1904, he announced two concerts, but the interest aroused by them was so great that he had to add another, and still another, and then he stopped simply because he did not feel strong enough for further efforts.

At some of his concerts Grieg had a most potent ally in his wife. Let us hear first what Tchaikovsky had to say about her (in the "Diary of My Tour in 1888," previously referred to):

"Together with Grieg, there entered the room where we were assembled, a lady who was growing slightly grey and resembled him very closely, being just as small, fragile, and sympathetic. She was his wife, and also his cousin, which accounts for their resemblance. Subsequently I was able to appreciate the many and precious qualities pos-

sessed by Madame Grieg. In the first place she proved to be an excellent, though not very finished singer; secondly, I have never met a better informed or more highly cultivated woman, and she is, among other things, an excellent judge of our literature, in which Grieg himself was also deeply interested; thirdly, I was soon convinced that Madame Grieg was as amiable, as gentle, as childishly simple and without guile as her celebrated husband." [1]

In an article on "Edvard Grieg and his Wife," which appeared in the now defunct *Looker-on* (New York) some years ago, Mr. Joakim Reinhard said that while "nothing were easier than to criticise Mrs. Grieg's singing . . . yet no singing ever made such impression on me as hers, and, as far as I know, all that have been fortunate enough to hear her confess to a similar conviction. . . . As soon as Mrs. Grieg has been singing but for a few moments we forget that we are in a concert-hall listening to a prearranged performance. We suffer with this

[1] Tchaikovsky's letters of the years 1887 and 1888 contain several other expressions of delight over Grieg, his wife, and his music. Under date of January 20, 1888, he writes: "At Brodsky's there was a soirée, at which a new sonata by Grieg enchanted me. Grieg and his wife are so droll, sympathetic, interesting, and original, that it is impossible to give an idea of them in a letter." See Modeste Tchaikovsky's Life and Letters of his brother, edited by Rosa Newmarch (John Lane). There are also interesting glimpses of the Grieg's in Brodsky's Reminiscences.

woman, cry, laugh, are jubilant, until at last all is over, and we go home, suddenly recalling, or being reminded by some more cold-blooded individual, that in the first three or four bars of such and such a song Mrs. Grieg made such and such mistakes. It is a strange fact, but it is an incontrovertible one, that nobody ever observed any errors in the latter part of Mrs. Grieg's songs. Probably there never were any."

Only a few cities were favoured with song recitals by Edvard and Nina Grieg — Christiania, Copenhagen, Leipsic, Rome, Paris, and London.[1] They were enjoyed as unique artistic events, and while it was taken as a matter of course that the composer should reveal new poetic details in the piano parts, every one was surprised to find that an unheralded singer should outshine most of the famous professionals in her ability to stir the soul with her interpretative art. Concerning the impression she made on some famous persons — and on her husband himself — I may be permitted to cite what I wrote in another book,[2] my information being derived from the composer himself:

[1] In December, 1897, they played and sang for the Queen at Windsor. "She is so charming and interested," wrote Grieg to Röntgen, "that it is quite an astonishing thing in a lady of her age."

[2] "Songs and Song Writers." New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons. London: John Murray.

"Frau von Holstein, wife of the composer, Franz von Holstein, and a personal friend of Mendelssohn and Schumann, once declared that Mme. Grieg's singing reminded her of Jenny Lind's in its captivating *abandon*, dramatic vivacity, soulful treatment of the poem, and unaffected manner, unlike that of the typical prima donna. Edmund Neupert sent her one volume of his *études* with the inscription, 'To Mme. Nina Grieg, whose song is more beautiful and warmer than that of all others.' Ibsen, after hearing her interpret his poems as set to music by Grieg, whispered, shaking the hands of both, 'Understood.' Tchaikovsky heard her sing 'Springtide' (Album, Vol. III. No. 38) in Leipsic, and tears came to his eyes. Subsequently he sent her his own songs, with a cordial dedication.

"Mme. Grieg made her last public appearance in 1898 in London, when she also sang for Queen Victoria at Windsor. Now she sings only for her husband and his friends. He deeply regrets that so few had the opportunity to hear her when her voice was in its prime. At that time he hardly realised her superiority to the average professional singer. It seemed to him a matter of course that one should sing so beautifully, so eloquently, so soulfully as she did. Yet her talent was not wasted.

It inspired Grieg to renewed efforts. His best songs were written for her; they embody his personal feelings, and he confesses that he could no more have stopped expressing them in songs than he could have stopped breathing. It is an interesting case, showing how conjugal affection may be an inspirer of the arts quite as well as the romantic love which precedes marriage."

## CHAPTER VIII

### Norwegian Folk-Music — Grieg's Originality

KING OSCAR of Sweden — and, until 1905, of Norway — once wrote a book entitled "Aphorisms concerning Music and Song." Of the popular airs of his realm he said that they "seem a part of our very homes on cold, long winter evenings, by the crackling pine-wood fire on the hearth; but they are heard to best advantage, perhaps, far from human habitations during the pale sultry summer nights of the North. They do not glow with the heat of the sun, but with inner warmth and unsophisticated feeling. They emanate from the innermost parts of a people, more than any other, the large majority of which is constrained to live a lonesome life, and, consequently, is predisposed to take a melancholy and even mystical view of the world, but which owns a generous and true heart, and has given countless proofs of earnest character and enduring will. This is why the Swedish popular airs always make a deep impression upon their hearers."

The climate and remoteness of Sweden and Norway have not only impressed a peculiar local colour on their native music, they have also helped to preserve its primitive character. Some old-fashioned musical instruments, dances, and tunes, which used to be practised in other European places, found their last refuge in the North, which preserved them, somewhat altered by the imprint of its own peculiar stamp; and to these the Northern people added an abundance of home-made folk art and amusement. How great this abundance is may be inferred from the fact that on the Faroe Islands (a region which, like Telemarken, in South-Western Norway, is peculiarly fertile in folk-songs) there are places where an old custom prescribes that the same song must not be sung in the dance rooms more than once a year.[1]

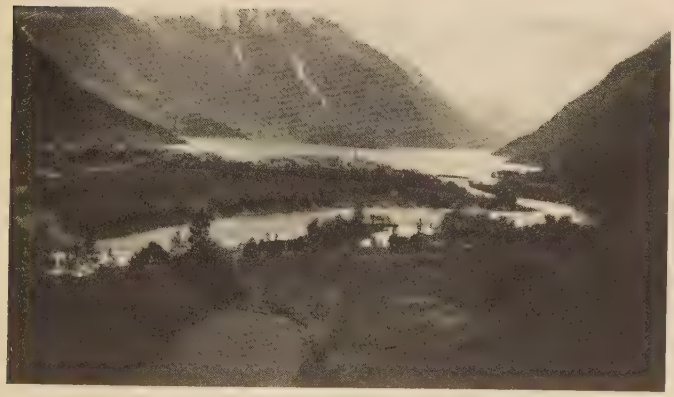
Here in the Far North (the Norwegian Hammerfest is the northernmost town in the world) one may still chance upon a dance at which the music

[1] A copious collection of Scandinavian folk-songs is contained in the three volumes of Arwidson's "Svenska Fornsanger" (Stockholm, 1834). For students of aboriginal colour this collection is particularly valuable, as the tunes are given without the addition of arbitrary accompaniments, which are so apt to falsify their character. See also Lindemann's collection of 540 Norwegian melodies and dances; Warmuth's "Norske National-og Folke Melodier," and Johan Halvorsen's collection used by Grieg himself (edition Peters).

is, as in the primitive days elsewhere, vocal instead of instrumental, and the dancers attentive and responsive to the words as they are sung; at weddings, indeed, the first dances are sung to psalm tunes, and the preacher in his sacerdotal robe takes part in them. Usually, however, the dances are too lively for vocal music, and the fiddle is brought into play. The most popular of the folk-dances in the mountainous regions of Norway are the Springdans and the Halling, of each of which there are admirable specimens among Grieg's works, partly borrowed, partly original, while others have been arranged for pianoforte by Kjerulf, Lindemann, etc. The Springdans, so called to distinguish it from the Ganger, or walking dance, is in three-four measure, the Halling in two-four. The Springdans is characterised by a striking combination of binary and ternary rhythms, and a progressive animation very exciting to the hearer. Of the Halling, which is a solo dance, Björnson gives a striking description in his story entitled "Arne":

"The music began, deep silence prevailed, and Nils gòt ready for the dance. Airily he moved over the floor, marched in time with the music, his body half bent forward and rocking to right and left; now and then he crossed his legs, stood up

A Hardanger Wedding
*Photo by Carl Venth.*



Odda, Hardanger Fjord
*Photo by Carl Venth.*

straight again, assuming the attitude of a thrower, and then marched as at first, bent over. The fiddle was played with a sure hand, the melody became gradually faster and more fiery. Nils inclined his head more and more backwards, and all at once he hit the cross-plank of the ceiling with his foot, so hard that dust and whitewash fell on the spectators. Everybody laughed and shouted, and the girls stood as if they were breathless. Noisily the fiddler played on and on, with more and more fiery and challenging strains. Nils could not resist them; he bowed forward, jumped about in measure, stood up straight, assumed the attitude of a thrower, to fool them, then again crossed his legs under him, and suddenly, when it seemed as if he had no thought of jumping, he hit the plank of the ceiling a resounding blow with his foot, again and again, then threw somersaults in the air, forward and backward, standing straight as a candle on his feet after each. He had all he wanted. The fiddle played a few more bars in rapid time, laboured with tones that became lower and lower, until the dance music died out in a long-sustained bass note."

Mr. Goldschmidt relates the legend that it once happened that, whilst the dance whirled to the wild,

fiery music — to the strain proceeding as it were, from the depths of the earth, from the foaming waterfall, from the howling tempest of the mountains — the knives of the men left their sheaths, and blood flowed along the floor. The cellarman, on going down to get some beer, saw seated behind a hogshead Old Nick himself playing the fiddle; then, understanding why blood flowed so freely above, he came up and cried: "Stop your ears, the devil plays the fiddle!" There are many legends of a similar kind.

"Everywhere in the North we find among the people tunes that are ascribed to the devil, the Nix, or the subterranean spirits. The player offered up a lamb to the river, and thus induced the Nix to teach him such tunes. But when he subsequently played them, he was unable to stop, but played on and on like a madman, until some one could come to the rescue by cutting his fiddle strings." [1]

It is necessary to know about such legends if one would understand the spirit and meaning of Norwegian music in all its phases. A quarter of a century ago an English critic, brought up on Handel and Mendelssohn, inveighed against the "rowdy-

[1] Cited from Dr. von Ravn's excellent article on Scandinavian music and instruments, in the supplementary volume to Mendel's "Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon."

ism and brutalities" of some of Grieg's pieces, even as the German critics did against certain scenes in Wagner's operas. In the meantime most of us have learned to appreciate realism in music and to understand that a peasant dance is necessarily wilder than the tunes of our own ball-rooms. Very much, of course, depends on the performance. When Grieg himself plays these pieces a cultivated audience is as thoroughy enthralled as are the Northern peasants by their fiddlers. Extremes meet. Liszt was the first pianist who showed that an artist who plays without his notes is much more eloquent than one who uses them, just as an extempore speaker is more eloquent than one who reads a lecture. Now, the Norwegian peasant fiddlers have never used notes; they play entirely "by heart" in more than one sense; like the gypsies, from whom Liszt learned the secret.

There is another respect in which the peasant fiddlers anticipated the latest stages of modern virtuosity. Some of the weird effects which caused it to be whispered that Paganini had the devil for his ally were produced by altering the tuning of the strings. The players of the old Norwegian fele, or fiddle, have three different ways of tuning it; a –d—$a^1$—$e^2$; a—$e^1$—$a^1$—$e^2$; a—$e^1$—$a^1$—c sharp.[2]

Nor is this all. When a Richard Strauss or a Martin Loeffler wants to give his orchestral score an ultra-modern colouring, he introduces the viola d'amore, which has, beside the strings that are played on, an equal number placed below them, which vibrate sympathetically and enrich the tone. The Norwegian fele has four of these sympathetic strings.[1]

One of the most wonderful of modern songs — Schubert's *Hurdy-Gurdy Player* (*Der Leiermann*) — has throughout its sixty-one bars a drone-bass of two tones a fifth apart. Such a drone-bass of one or two tones usually accompanies the fele player's melody. It is the earliest form of the organ point, or pedal point, with which the great masters, from Bach to Wagner, have produced some of their grandest effects. Grieg uses it as quaintly and as artistically as Schubert did.[2] He also uses occa-

[1] Carl Venth, in a letter to the author, refers to still another peculiarity of the fele music. "It was curious to observe the different point of view of Grieg and Sinding toward the Hardanger music. At times the playing of the Hardanger fiddlers sounds out of tune to us, but Grieg insisted that they used smaller intervals than our half-steps, and claimed that their music probably came from Hungary, while Sinding insisted that they played out of tune. I have made a special study of the Norwegian fele music and am sure that Grieg was correct."

[2] The drone bass is a characteristic of Northern instruments in general. Possibly Grieg's love of it was stimulated also by atavistic reminiscences of his Scotch antecedents. The Scotch bagpipe, with its superbly monotonous drone, has a much greater artistic value than our super-

sionally still another element of the primitive Norse music which shows how extremes meet. In mediæval times, before harmony was invented, melodies were written in several modes (known as the ecclesiastic modes) differing as widely from each other as our modern major and minor modes differ from one another. Three of these church modes — formerly part of the real world-language of music — are to be found in many of the Northern melodies — the hypodorian, the hypolydian, and the Phrygian. Liszt, Franz, Tchaikovsky, and other ultra-modern masters owe some of their most striking effects to the revival of the old modes, which

cilious professional musicians fancy. See the poetic article on "The Music of the Gael," by Vernon Blackburne, in the London *Musical Times* of September, 1903. I wish I had room to quote what he says both as to "the cry of the pipes and the immeasurable sadness of the Scottish tunes," and as to the spirit of awful jollity which at other times is upon the bagpipes — a jollity which "grows ten times more awful by reason of the sustained pedal-note, a closely paid attention to which possesses within it some of the stray seeds that grow up into the fine flowers of delirious obsession. . . . As you wait by the coffin of the dead, you hear the dim sound of the Coronach as it grows keener to your hearing. The pedal-note is a long monotone of grief, an enduring moan for the thing that has been. The melancholy and windlike harmonies that are blown above that note hither and thither, fall to the varying mood of the mourner, who finds, it may be for the first time, with wonder and dismay, that to the human heart even the sense of loss must, in its acutest knowledge of the present, take a relief and a change which seem almost a treachery. Such music as this, thus played, and on this instrument, once more, in its gloomy and magnificent completion, shows that in the mourning for the dead Scotland triumphed unto the attainment of the culmination of her musical art."

are certainly destined to play a great rôle in the music of the future. As regards Grieg's occasional use of them, he informs me that they came under his pen almost unconsciously. Some of these strange harmonies seem to exaggerate the lugubriousness of our minor mode.[1]

The general spirit of Norwegian music has been well summed up by Carl Engel in his "Study of National Music." He thinks "it is a curious fact that those nations which possess the most lugubrious music possess also the most hilarious tunes. The songs of the Norwegians are generally very plaintive, though at the same time very beautiful; and some of the Norwegian dances have perhaps more resemblance to dirges than to the dances of some other nations; but in single instances the Norwegian tunes exhibit an unbounded joy and cheerfulness, such as we rarely meet with in the music of other people. Indeed, the Norwegians, so far as their music is concerned, might be compared to the hypochondriac, who occasionally, though seldom, gives himself up to an almost excessive merriment."

[1] For further remarks on Grieg's harmonic originality, see the chapter on his pianoforte music. The strangeness of Debussy's harmonies is due largely to his free use of these mediæval church modes. See Lawrence Gilman's "Pelléas et Mélisande," p. 15.

"The fundamental trait of Norwegian folk-song, as contrasted with the German is," as Grieg once wrote to me, "a deep melancholy, which may suddenly change to a wild unrestrained gayety. Mysterious gloom and indomitable wildness — these are the contrasts of Norwegian folk-song."

Grieg is often spoken of as an embodiment of Scandinavian music. But, as he himself once pointed out in a letter to the *New York Times:* "I am not an exponent of 'Scandinavian' music, but only of Norwegian. The national characteristics of the three peoples — the Norwegians, the Swedes and the Danes — are wholly different, and their music differs just as much." It differs very much as the scenery does; the Norwegian is bolder, rougher, wilder, grander, yet with a green fertile vale here and there in which strawberries and cherries reach a fragrance or flavour hardly attained anywhere else in the world. In the wildest of Grieg's pieces we often are enchanted by glimpses of such green vales — one of the characteristics of his music.

Concerning Grieg's relations to the national music of Norway the most ludicrous notions prevail among professional musicians and amateurs. With a persistence worthy of a better cause the

wiseacres keep telling their readers that Grieg made a very promising beginning at Leipsic in writing "world-music," but that after his return to his home he unfortunately turned consciously to Norwegian folk-music, and, "struck with the freshness of the native dances, transplanted them bodily into his academic flower-pots," as one critic puts it; while a second bewails the fact that thenceforth Grieg "stuck in the fjord and never got out of it." A third gives the gist of these lamentations at Grieg's failure to rise to the rank of a writer of "world-music" in these words: "Grieg, despite the many beauties in his works, writes in a dialect quite as truly as did Burns, Christopher North, or Ensign Odoherty."

The second of the critics just cited is a German; the other two are Americans. When a German fancies that his country owns the "world-language" in music, one may pardon him, for national vanity is a universal folly; but when one who is not a German parrots their nonsense about musical "dialects," it is time to protest. Dialect signifies a provincial mode of speaking a language. What is Norway a province of, musically or otherwise? A wiser and deeper critic than the men just cited, Robert Schumann, wrote, as we have seen, that "the North

is most decidedly entitled to a language of its own."

At one time, not so very long ago, Italian was the "world-language" in music. When the Germans began to graft their harmonies and dissonances on this euphonious stock, the Italians were aghast at the Northern "rowdyism and brutalities," [1] and in all probability they considered German music a mere "dialect." As a matter of fact, the Germans were enriching the world-language of music with precious new material; and this is precisely what Grieg has done with his alleged Norse "dialect." He has provided a large storehouse of absolutely new melodic material — a boon to countless students and imitators; he has created the latest harmonic atmosphere in Music, having gone beyond even Liszt and the most audacious Germans in his innovations; and he has thus, like Schubert, like Wagner, like Chopin, *enlarged the world-language of music.* He has taught new idioms to some of the most prominent composers of his time, among them Tchaikovsky, Paderewski, D'Albert, Mac-

[1] It is well known that when Mozart, in 1785, wrote six quartets (dedicated to Haydn), and they were sent to Artaria, that Italian promptly returned them to the publisher with the complaint that they were full of misprints. When the Hungarian Prince Grassalkowitch heard these quartets, he thought the players were making mistakes, and on finding that they were following copy he tore up the music.

Dowell. An English critic has pointed out "unmistakable analogies from the standpoint of technical analysis" between the harmonic peculiarities of Grieg and those of Richard Strauss; and as Grieg had done most of his work when Strauss began, he is, of course, the originator, and Strauss the disciple.

From every point of view that interests the music-lover, Grieg is one of the most original geniuses in the musical world of the present or past. His songs are a mine of melody, surpassed in wealth only by Schubert's, and that only because there are more of Schubert's. In originality of harmony and modulation he has only six equals: Bach, Schubert, Chopin, Schumann, Wagner, and Liszt. In rhythmic invention and combination he is inexhaustible, and as orchestrator he ranks among the most fascinating. To speak of such a man — seven-eighths of whose works are still music of the future — as a writer in "dialect," is surely the acme of unintelligence. If Grieg did "stick in the fjord and never get out of it," even a German ought to thank heaven for it. Grieg in a fjord is much more picturesque and more interesting to the world than he would have been in the Elbe or the Spree.

Many worthy Germans fancy to the present day

that Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Liszt, and Dvořák wrote in musical "dialects" in so far as they incorporated Polish, Russian, Hungarian, and Bohemian characteristics in their works. They forget that some of their own masters — Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms among them — gladly made use of the folk-music of foreign countries (notably Hungary), without being accused of speaking a dialect. Then there is Haydn, usually called the father of classical music — the world-music to which Mozart and Beethoven and all the others contributed their quota. Yet what Haydn did was so precisely like what Grieg is accused of doing that what Mr. Hadow says in the admirable volume he contributed to the "Oxford History of Music," concerning the Croatian Haydn, applies word for word to the Norwegian Grieg: "Eisenstadt lay near his home, the whole countryside was full of the folk-songs which he had loved from childhood — songs of the ploughman and the reaper, of rustic courtship and village merrymaking. Half unconsciously he began to weave them into the texture of his composition; borrowing here a phrase, there a strain, there an entire melody, and gradually fashioning his own tunes on these models; . . . they find their way into everything — quartets, concertos,

divertimenti, even hymns and masses; *they renew with fresh and vigorous life an art that appeared to be growing old before its time.*"

Grieg's relation to the popular art of his country is admirably indicated in his preface to his opus 72, entitled "Slätter," and containing seventeen peasant dances, written down by John Halvorsen as played on the Hardanger fiddle by an old musician in Telemarken:

"Those who can appreciate this kind of music will be delighted at the extraordinary originality of these tunes, their blending of delicacy and grace with rough power and untamed wildness as regards the melody and more particularly the rhythm. These traditional tunes, handed down from an age when the Norwegian peasantry was isolated from the world in its solitary mountain valleys, all bear the stamp of an imagination equally daring and bizarre.

"My object in arranging this music for the pianoforte was to attempt to raise these folk-tunes to an artistic level by harmonising them in a style suitable to their nature. It is obvious that many of the little embellishments characteristic of the peasant's fiddle and his peculiar manner of bowing cannot be reproduced on the pianoforte, and had therefore

to be left out. By way of compensation the piano has the advantage of enabling us to avoid excessive monotony by virtue of its dynamic and rhythmic capacities and by varying the harmony in case of repetitions. I have endeavoured to trace the melodic lines clearly, and to make the outlines of forms definite and coherent."

While noting these interesting facts, it is of the utmost importance, if we would be just to Grieg, to guard against the egregious and all too prevalent error of supposing that the essence and substance of his art are borrowed from the Norse folk-music. Writers on musical topics have taken strangely little trouble to study this question, as is illustrated by the fact that so scholarly a critic as Philip Goepp could write, not long ago: "The wealth of harmonic invention of Grieg suggests a wonder whether, after all, much of the purely individual quality of his music has not been mistaken for a national vein." Quite so. Ernest Closson wrote, in 1892: "Strange thing! Grieg has so thoroughly identified himself with the musical spirit of his country that the rôles have become, as it were, reversed. His personality — a personality which in itself has nothing in common with the music of the people — seems to have become the prototype of this same

music of the people; and the composers, his compatriots, imitate and copy him quite innocently in the belief that they are simply making use of local colour!" In my "Songs and Song Writers" I took occasion to say on this point:

"While his compositions are unmistakably Norwegian, it is important to remember that *there is much more of Grieg in them than of Norway.* The melodies, though redolent of their native soil, are emphatically his own — you do not find such enchanting melodies even among Norwegian folk-songs — and still more unmistakably his own are his bold and fascinating harmonies; for folk-music in its primitive state has no harmonies at all, whereas Grieg's music, as I have already remarked, represents the very latest phase in the evolution of harmony. His modulations are as unique, as unexpected, as abrupt, yet as natural as Schubert's; and they have the same power of moving us to tears. As in the case of Chopin, imitators have copied these individual peculiarities of Grieg's genius without any thought of robbing his beehives, but simply under the delusion that they were helping themselves to the common stores of wild honey. . . . 'How delightfully Norwegian!' amateurs and professionals are apt to exclaim, when they ought

to say, 'How delightfully Griegian!' . . . Among his seventy [74] works, there are, beside two [3] volumes of pianoforte arrangements of popular tunes, only three (notably op. 30, 35, and 64) in which he has incorporated Norwegian melodies; all the others are his own. 'Solvejg's Lied' is obviously a conscious imitation of the national music, but it stands almost alone in this respect. On the whole there is probably more of the Norwegian colouring in Grieg's pianoforte music than in his songs; but the more we study Norwegian folk-song and the Northern composers before Grieg, the more we are astounded at his originality."

This matter cannot be too much emphasised. Largely through indolence and a parroting propensity on the part of musical critics and historians, a cruel injustice has been done to one of the most original and influential geniuses in the realm of music — an injustice the more to be deplored because Grieg has been an invalid the greater part of his life, and therefore must have been often depressed by the customary incorrect estimates of his achievements. True, the public has been on his side, but that very fact the pedants have turned against him. "To the musical amateur," writes one of them superciliously, "no contemporary composer

is better known than Grieg. Every school-girl plays his piano pieces [?], young violinists study his delightfully melodious sonatas, and few concert pieces are more widely loved than the Peer Gynt Suite. Yet from professional musicians Grieg does not meet with such favour. Many speak of him patronisingly, some scornfully. 'Grieg!' they say, 'Oh yes, very charming, but —'; and the sentence ends with a shrug."

Is this true? Do professional musicians shrug their shoulders at Grieg, while amateurs and the public adore him? If so, Grieg's immortality is assured, for the history of musical genius shows that whenever there has been such a discrepancy the amateurs have invariably worsted the professionals. Now, there can be no doubt that professionals do speak of Grieg superciliously — quite as superciliously as they used to speak of Bach and Mozart, and Gluck and Beethoven, and Schubert and Chopin, and Schumann and Wagner, and Liszt and others — that is, the minor musicians, the small fry of the profession, do this. But the great men in the profession (it takes genius to appreciate genius) recognised Grieg at once as a peer. Ole Bull and Gade may be disregarded here, for they might have been influenced by a Scandinavian

bias when they welcomed him to their ranks. Not so Liszt. His eagle eye, as we have seen, instantly discovered the rare and precious gift of originality in Grieg's works; and he knew, too, that the pedants and philistines would scarify him for the very things that were newest and most valuable in him, wherefore his exhortation: "Do not let them intimidate you" (*abschrecken*) — a bit of advice which, no doubt, comforted Grieg as often as Liszt's approval comforted Wagner in the years when most of the "professionals" shrugged their shoulders at his "music of the future," as they scornfully called it.

Tchaikovsky was another master who instantly recognised the originality of Grieg's genius, concerning which he wrote in his Diary:

"Hearing the music of Grieg, we instinctively recognise that it was written by a man impelled by an irresistible impulse to give vent by means of sounds to a flood of poetical emotion, which obeys no theory or principle, is stamped with no impress but that of a vigorous and sincere artistic feeling. Perfection of form, strict and irreproachable logic in the development of his themes, are not perseveringly sought after by the celebrated Norwegian. But what charm, what inimitable and rich musical imagery! What warmth and passion in his me-

lodic phrases, what teeming vitality in his harmony, what originality and beauty in the turn of his piquant and ingenious modulations and rhythms, and in all the rest what interest, novelty, and independence! If we add to all this that rarest of qualities, a perfect simplicity, far removed from all affectation and pretence to obscurity and far-fetched novelty," etc. . . .

"I trust it will not appear like self-glorification that my dithyramb in praise of Grieg precedes the statement that our natures are closely allied. Speaking of Grieg's high qualities, I do not at all wish to impress my readers with the notion that I am endowed with an equal share of them. I leave it to others to decide how far I am lacking in all that Grieg possesses in such abundance, but I cannot help stating the fact that he exercises and has exercised some measure of that attractive force which always drew me towards the gifted Norwegian." [1]

[1] In connection with the above I cannot resist the malicious impulse to call attention to an amusing instance of "professional shoulder-shrugging" in the "Scandinavian Number" of *Die Musik* (Berlin), wherein the same critic who lamented the fact that Grieg "stuck in the fjord" declared that while "not a genius," he is "fresher and has more substance" than Chopin, and resembles Tchaikovsky, who is at present "very much overrated." There you are! Three of the greatest men of the modern musical world smitten with the jawbone of a piano teacher!

Hans von Bülow, in a letter dated London, November 27, 1878, exclaimed with reference to certain works of Tchaikovsky: "Blasé though I am, I was truly enchanted, nay intoxicated, by their freshness, power, depth, and originality. He is a true *tone-poet*," he declared, and added that Edvard Grieg is another, after explaining that "a tone-poet is above all things a romanticist who, however, developing into a genius, may also become a classic as, for instance, Chopin." In another letter, dated March 16, 1874, he says: "Hartvigson, who had accompanied me to Moscow, gave me enormous joy with a sonata for violin and piano (opus 8) by Grieg, which unites the advantage of Rubinstein's imagination with Raff's structural skill. The work has appeared in a cheap edition (Peters) — you must get it *immediately* and refresh yourself with it." [1]

[1] Grieg's music will take care of itself. It is for the honour of musicians, and to prove my assertion that it is the small fry and not the high-class professionals who shrug their shoulders at Grieg, that I wish to place on record a few additional opinions which will help future generations to judge how far his wondrous genius was appreciated by his contemporaries. I confine myself to artists concerning whose attitude I can speak from personal knowledge. Paderewski told me, not long ago, that his admiration of Grieg's works grew more ardent the more he studied them. MacDowell simply worshipped Grieg, to whom he dedicated two of his sonatas. "His music is like a glass of fresh water in a desert," he once said to a pupil. D'Albert has long been a Grieg missionary; on one of his American tours he hardly gave a concert with-

Grieg had the satisfaction of knowing that whatever mistakes critics might make in their estimates,

out a piece by the Norwegian. Raoul Pugno is another who plays Grieg *con amore;* so do Teresa Carreno and Fannie Bloomfield-Zeissler, while Dr. Wm. Mason, the Nestor of American pianists and teachers, was one of his pioneer champions. Among the great violinists who adore him are Brodsky, who has written about him in his Reminiscences; Fritz Kreisler and Johannes Wolff; the latter, who made a concert tour in England in 1897 with Grieg, and often played with him on the Continent, writes to me: "His sonatas are *grand;* they are much played, but very few know how to play Grieg; you must know him, his beautiful country, and the Norwegian character. His works are full of passion and poetry; the more I play them the more I love them, and always I find freshness and beauty. Grieg is a great man." The vocalists who give song recitals have not yet given Grieg's songs the attention they deserve — to their own detriment. Some, however, have discovered these treasures, notably Lilli Lehmann, who gives them much space on her programmes. For orchestra, Grieg wrote comparatively little, but the two greatest musical missionaries America has harboured lost no opportunity to bring forward what there was. Theodore Thomas's list (for which I am indebted to Mrs. Thomas) included the concert overture "In the Autumn," the two "Peer Gynt" suites, "Sigurd Jorsalfar," "Symphonic Dances," "Evening in the Mountain," "At the Cradle," "Heart Wounds," "Spring," "Norwegian Melodies," "Cow-keeper's Tune," and "Country Dances," scenes from "Olaf Trygvason," piano concerto, "Eit Syn." Anton Seidl, (see Chapter X), arranged several of the pianoforte pieces for orchestra. Finally I may mention the fact that the theorists also are beginning to awake to the fact that Grieg's harmonies mark a new departure in music. In his "Die Freiheit oder Unfreiheit der Töne" (Leipsic: C. F. Kahnt), Georg Capellen devotes twenty-six pages to an analysis of Grieg's harmonic innovations. He thus sums up his views: "Grieg is recognised far beyond his native country as one of the few masters who have enriched music with new means of harmonic and melodic expression, and created an admirable home-art distinguished by poetic feeling, and the charm of many moods (*Stimmungsreiz*). For this reason the study of his 'Lyrical Pieces' for piano, in particular, cannot be too highly commended to music lovers, were it only to make it clear to them that the one-sided narrow theoretical rules, as usually taught, too often fail in face of this lovely art, without its losing thereby any of its charm."

the public was with him everywhere and always; and he must have felt, too, when the tribute of spontaneous and overwhelming enthusiasm was paid him at his public appearances, that *vox populi vox dei* — that the voice of the public proclaimed him a genius with a message from above. To be sure, the public has often as wildly applauded unworthy artists who stooped to conquer; but Grieg never stooped to conquer. His music is true folk-music, yet it is intensely aristocratic. That may seem a paradox, but it is true.

He made the mistake of paying no tribute to the pedants and schoolmen. Had he been worldly wise, he would have written a certain number of pieces bristling with big words and learned foot-notes, so to speak; the professors would then have welcomed him as a colleague, especially if these learned pieces had embodied no new melodies. Instead of conciliating the minor professionals in this manner, he annoyed them beyond measure by doing what they could not do to save their lives — composing pieces with original melodies, and so simple in structure that the general public could appreciate them at once. To get even, they accused him of a lack of depth. They tried to make the public believe that their own favourite pebbles

were deeper. These pebbles certainly were more opaque than Grieg's diamonds, but, somehow, the public preferred the translucent Grieg diamonds.

Brahms once said of Dvořák: "Dem fällt immer etwas ein" ("He is never at a loss for an idea"). In a conversation with Saint-Saëns when he was in New York I asked him why he had never written any more symphonic poems. "Because no more ideas came to me," he replied. Grieg resembled both Dvořák and Saint-Saëns: when he set about composing a piece he was never at a loss for an idea; and when he had no idea he refused to compose. Had all composers followed his principle, how much less rubbish the shelves of our music shops would be burdened with!

Because of this restraint, and of his persistent ill-health, Grieg did not write a great many works; Opus 74 is the last on the list. But it is better so. In his garden there are chiefly flowers, few weeds; there is little need of anthologies and selections. In not all of his pieces and songs, of course, did he "strike twelve," but in few of them did he fail to strike eleven or ten; which can be said of few composers. Ruskin once expressed the fear that his books would not live because he had written so many. Grieg had no such reason to apprehend

the future. His works contain that concentrated quintessence of genius for which alone it is safe to predict immortality.

On the occasion of Grieg's sixtieth birthday Mr. Leonard Liebling wrote in the New York *Musical Courier:*

"Posterity will fix his worth as a composer — even though some of our contemporaries have hurriedly tried to forestall posterity. It is not always safe to deny a composer greatness simply because he is 'popular.' If Grieg is but for the day he is certainly enjoying a very long day. There are no perceptible signs of Grieg's waning. The publishers are doing as good business as ever with the 'Humoresken,' the violin sonatas, the cello sonata, the wedding marches, the piano concerto, the songs ('Ich liebe dich,' 'Im Kahn,' 'Der Schwan,' 'Solvejg's Lied,' etc.), the 'Peer Gynt' music, the 'Holberg' suite, the piano sonata, the 'Ballade,' and the albums of 'Lyric Pieces.' *It is stupid to reproach Grieg with being too national. Had he been less so he would not now be universal.* That is a curious paradox in music. See Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Smetana, Verdi, Wagner and others" — notably Haydn, Liszt, and Chopin.

Comparing Grieg with Chopin, in the *Looker-on,*

Joakim Reinhard uses a poetic simile which, more than pages of analysis, explains the charm of the mixture of individuality and nationality we find in these composers:

"While the genius of Chopin is as rich and original as that of Grieg, the latter has more of what the Germans call 'Naturlaute,' sounds of Nature. This should not be understood as though the Norwegian were a less conscious and consummate artist than the Pole — far from it. Only he works in material of quite another kind. The difference is one of deeper significance than one of mere training or style. Thus both composers are intensely national in the sense that the peculiar rhythms and harmonious modulations of the folk-music of their respective peoples lie at the root of their work, *flowing through it as the sap of a wild trunk flows through a twig of a rare and highly cultivated fruit tree that has been grafted upon it.* But Chopin loves unhappy Poland in an elegiac, hopelessly yearning way: Grieg is jubilantly proud of the defiant, aggressive country on whose soil he was born. To be sure, gloom and melancholy may occasionally thrive in the deep shadows of Norway's mountains, and that, too, has been embodied by Grieg in his music. But, unlike Chopin, he has

always been too virile to allow his soul to drift along aimlessly on the dark waters of despair, — with a sort of voluptuous feeling of total self-abandonment."

## CHAPTER IX

### Last Years, Death, and Funeral

GRIEG'S sixtieth birthday, on June 15, 1903, was celebrated not only in the cities of Scandinavia, but throughout Europe and America, many concerts being devoted entirely or partly to a commemoration of the event. Björnson delivered one of his most eloquent and patriotic orations on this occasion.

One of the warmest admirers of Grieg was the German emperor. For years he made a tour of the picturesque Norwegian fjords every summer, on his yacht *Hohenzollern*, and in 1903 he invited Grieg on board, but the composer had to decline. On July 21, 1904, Grieg wrote to his Leipsic publisher and friend Mr. Hinrichsen a remarkably interesting letter [1] which reads in an English translation:

"The other day I had a chance to meet your Kaiser. He had already expressed a desire last

[1] Printed in the original in the Grieg biography of Schjelderup and Niemann (C. F. Peters).

GRIEG'S SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY

year to meet me, but I was ill at that time. Now he has renewed his wish, and therefore I could not decline the invitation. I am, as you know, little of a courtier. But I said to myself: remember Aalesund [for which the Kaiser had sent a large sum after the great fire], and my sense of duty conquered. Our first meeting was at breakfast at the German consul's house. During the meal we spoke much about music. I liked his ways, and — oddly enough! — our opinions also agreed. Afterwards he came to me and I had the pleasure of talking with him alone for nearly an hour. We spoke about everything between heaven and earth, about poetry, painting, religion, socialism, and the Lord knows what else.

"He was fortunately a human being and not an Emperor. I was therefore permitted to express my opinions openly, though in a discreet manner, of course. Then followed some music. He had brought along an orchestra (!), about forty men. He took two chairs, placed them in front of all the others, sat down on one and said: 'If you please, first parquet,' and then the music began: 'Sigurd Jorsalfar,' 'Peer Gynt,' and many other things.

"While the music was being played, he continually aided me in correcting the tempi and the expression,

although, as a matter of course, I had not wanted to do such a thing. He was very insistent, however, that I should make my intentions clear. Then he illustrated the impression made by the music by movements of his head and body. It was wonderful (*göttlich*) to watch his serpentine movements *à la Orientalin* while they played 'Anitra's Dance,' which quite electrified him.

"Afterwards I had to play for him on the piano, and my wife, who sat nearest him, told me that here too he illustrated the impression made on him, especially at the best places.

"I played the minuet from the pianoforte sonata, which he found 'very Germanic and powerfully built,' and the 'Wedding Day at Troldhaugen,' which piece he also liked.

"On the following day there was a repetition of these things on board the Hohenzollern, where we were all invited to dinner at eight o'clock. The orchestra played on deck in the most wondrously bright summer night, while many hundreds, nay, I believe thousands, of rowboats and small steamers were grouped about us.

"The crowd applauded constantly, and cheered enthusiastically whenever the Kaiser became visible. He treated me like a patient; he gave me his cloak,

and went to fetch a blanket with which he covered me carefully.

"I must not forget to relate that he grew so enthusiastic over 'Sigurd Jorsalfar,' the subject of which I explained to him as minutely as possible, that he said to von Hülsen, the intendant of the royal theatres, who sat next him: 'We must produce this work.'

"I then invited von Hülsen to come to Christiania, to witness a performance of it, and he said he was very eager to do so. All in all, this meeting was an event and a surprise in the best sense. The Kaiser certainly is a very uncommon man, a strange mixture of great energy, great self-reliance, and great kindness of heart. Of children and animals he spoke often and with sympathy, which I regard as a significant thing."

On the New Year's day following the Kaiser sent Grieg a telegram reading: "To the northern bard, to listen to whose strains has always been a joy to me, I send my most sincere wishes for the new year and new creative activity." In 1906, Grieg, having been once more the Kaiser's guest, wrote to Mr. Hinrichsen: "He was greatly pleased with having become once more a grandfather. He called to me across the table (referring to 'Sigurd

Jorsalfar'): 'Is it agreeable to you if I call the child Sigurd? It must be something *Urgermanisch*.' "

An interesting detail concerning the day when he was the Emperor's guest on his yacht — an incident on which Grieg afterwards dwelt with special satisfaction — is related in the Berlin *Tageblatt:* "As the two were conversing on deck a cold breeze suddenly sprang up, whereupon the Kaiser gave his military cloak to the aged and frail composer. With this over his shoulder, Grieg walked up and down deck, when an officer said to him: "Take care! His Majesty's mantle is dragging!" At that moment the Kaiser returned and remarked with a smile: "The main thing is that our master must not catch cold!"

Had Grieg been always as solicitous for his health as the Kaiser showed himself on this occasion, he might have lived some years longer than he did; but he continually indulged in activities which used up his strength. The reader will remember the close of one of his letters to the author, dated, May 2, 1905: "But now I am done! Completely exhausted by this exertion." Schjelderup says "he never spared his health, but subjected himself to the greatest exertions. Good advice was entirely disregarded. As he seldom was well

Björnson and Grieg at the Villa Troldhaugen, 1893

enough to be in a creative mood, the hearing and performing of his earlier works became a matter of vital necessity to him." On March 21, 1906, he wrote to Dr. Abraham that when he was not attending rehearsals, orchestrating, or keeping his fingers in practice so he could assist in playing his chamber music, he was good for nothing but lying flat on his back and resting.

"Thus it was the last time I was in London, nine years ago. I could endure nothing except my work, went nowhere, received no one. And now it is ten times worse. It is sheer recklessness on my part to do what I am asked to, and you will see me suffer for it. But man hurries to his destiny. If I ask myself honestly, I truly know not why I do these things. From a financial point of view I do not need to, and a public appearance is the most horrible thing I know. My nerves, my whole system, suffer indescribable tortures, but a certain something, I know not what, urges me on irresistibly. I cannot withstand a beautiful orchestral performance and a sympathetic audience, and that, I think, is what makes me so foolish."

In the same year he wrote to his publisher: "From all over the world I am now getting invitations to conduct. Irony of fate!" "It is a marvellous thing,

the way these foreign orchestras understand a composer's subtlest intentions after a rehearsal or two." Here was the sweet poison which killed him. He who had suffered so much bodily torture, so much unjust criticism, loved to bask in the sunshine of public sympathy.

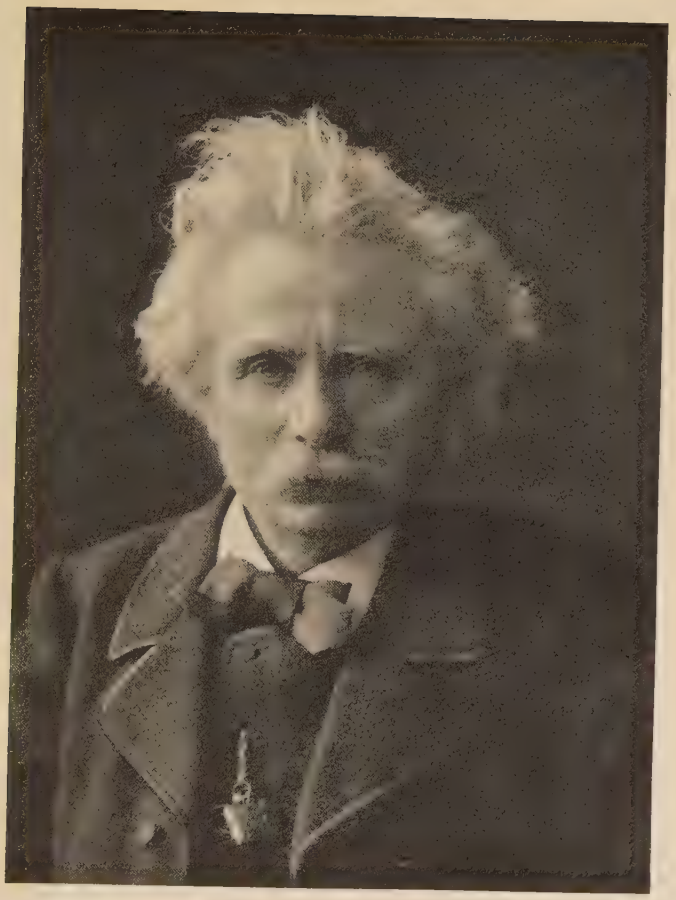
To his friend Oscar Meyer he wrote in April, 1902: "On the twenty-second I conducted a concert at the Philharmonic with works of my own. The orchestra played gloriously, and the reception I received — gigantic I tell you — was one such as I have never yet had to record. The public, in the end, followed me into the street and gave further cheers."

"My health has been bad throughout the summer," he wrote to the same friend two years later, "and I am forced to refuse all offers to conduct concerts. The second half of one's life ought, in fact, not to exist. Nature has herein again made a stupid blunder."

On July 4, 1906, he wrote:

"Dear Hoffianist,

"It is delightful to hear from you again and to be reminded of happier times. True it is that 'sadness creepeth into the heart'; and yet, though we cannot get through life without sorrow, we all, strangely enough, want to live on. With us here things are not moving very smoothly. My wife had to



EDVARD GRIEG, MAY, 1904.
*From a photograph by Karl Anderson, Christiania.*

undergo a severe operation, and is still far from well; her nerves have been terribly shaken, and we live like hermits, for she cannot yet join in any social intercourse, but requires all possible peace and quiet. We hope to leave Troldhaugen toward the middle or end of the month, and to go up among the mountains. There perhaps we may obtain renewed health and energy."

In another letter he said: "Yes, yes, at your age it is ever: hurrah, vivat, etc. At my age we say: sempre diminuendo. And I can tell you that it is not easy to make a beautiful diminuendo. You will find this out yourself some day."

He touches on this same point in a letter to Dr. Abraham (1900) and adds: "The good Herzogenberg once said: 'Life is a dinner. I have arrived at the cheese, which tastes very good.'"

It was characteristic of Grieg thus to take the most cheerful view of the situation. In the same letter he tells of an accident which nearly ended his life. He was travelling with his wife and Miss Hagerup to Söndmoer, where they were suddenly hurled into an abyss with horse and wagon. "It was a real wonder that we escaped with our lives — yes, even without injuries. Fortunately we fell on a soft place and the horses stuck so deeply in the mire that they could not move. The rain came down in torrents, *but we sang joyful tunes*

and were happy as children while we walked several hours along the road to the nearest town."

"You are perfectly right in being astonished that I still give concerts," he wrote to Meyer under date of December 2, 1906. "The fact is, however, that I allow myself to be persuaded to do so: I have, unfortunately, not strength of character enough to refuse." This was hardly to be wondered at when, for example, all the seats for concerts announced by him were sold months in advance. On February 26, 1907, he wrote to Meyer: "My concert in Berlin is on April 12. But the seats have long since been sold out. It will probably have to be repeated on the fourteenth as a matinée. Still it is as likely as not that I will have to decline, owing to illness. I am not feeling at all well. I must, however, make a good effort and see whether it may not be possible to give the four concerts in Germany, to which I have pledged myself. But then there must be an end to all concert giving for me. A short time ago some one writing from Germany addressed me as 'Most esteemed veteran'! It is time that I render myself worthy of this honorable title." [1]

[1] There are many other interesting glimpses in these letters to Oscar Meyer; sixteen in number, they were printed in the New York *Musical Courier* of April 22, 1908. Of Mr. Meyer's songs Grieg had a high

In a letter to a Swiss friend, the Rev. Monastier-Schroeder of Monclon (printed in *Die Musik*), Grieg said: "Your fears that I might write a coronation cantata made me smile. No, and again no, that is a thing I would never do, and I have invariably refused the invitation to do it absolutely. A few years ago I received a request from England to write a coronation march for the King, but this also I refused unconditionally." On the other hand he acceded to the urgent requests to give two concerts in London, in May (17 and 24), 1906. Concerning these concerts the London *World* said: "Though

opinion: "They are very poetical and beautiful, you verily have milk and honey on your tongue." "You are a very conjurer with your artistic performances, with this difference, however, that in your case, it is to be hoped, you gave some of your heart's blood as well. For truly, we are of one mind in this, that there can be no good music without inward loss of blood. It is sad but true." These letters also give amusing glimpses of Grieg's love of beautiful women: "You are truly a very knowing fellow! You evidently again want my autograph for one of your lovely lady pupils, as you once more ask me for a letter! Well, as you know, I am a great admirer, both of ladies, as well as of a certain Hofpianist, so you will assuredly not have long to wait." "What good is to me the exquisitely beautiful English lady? I don't even get a kiss from her. Nay, I have not even the slightest idea as to whether she sings well or is, in fact, musical! And yet, if she really is so exquisitely lovely as you say, then I forgive her, even if she is not musical." "Some day I hope also to make the acquaintance of your other fledglings. With Hildegarde I am already in love. My age is now fifty-eight. You may smile. But I assure you age is more dangerous than you may think. Well, the sea lies between us!" Read also his enthusiastic remarks (in Schjelderup and Niemann, p. 58) on Teresina Tua, ending with: "This fairy is a most charming creature, and if ever again I perpetrate a piece for violin it will be her fault."

he has for some time been a Doctor of Music of Cambridge, and is to-day to be made a Doctor of Oxford, one finds it hard to think of him as anything but Grieg. The very qualities which have made the people love him as they do are just the least doctorial — the open-air freshness, the strong personal note. Experience shows that the one thing which musicians as a class find his greatest weakness, the constant habit of repeating himself more or less, is just the thing that has endeared him to the rest of the world. They cry 'mannerism,' the world answers 'personality.' Musicians are professing that they have got tired of Grieg; the public is fonder of him than ever. Musicians have frequently to bear the shock of such unpleasant discoveries, and only posterity can decide whether the expert or the layman is in the right.

"That Queen's Hall was packed from floor to ceiling when Grieg stepped on to the platform on Thursday is by now common knowledge; it would be interesting to know whether the hall would have looked the same if anybody else had conducted the same programme. Still more remarkable is the fact that all the seats have been sold for Thursday's chamber concert, and this will probably be the first time that a concert which is not orchestral

has had the same effect. Grieg is certainly a picturesque and enigmatic personality, almost the only survivor of the old type of unworldly musician who shuns the crowd and thinks his thoughts in solitude."

As a matter of course a European composer whose houses were always sold out weeks in advance of the concert was bound to get many offers from America. To one of these, made by R. E. Johnston, of New York, he sent this answer, dated May 16, 1907; it was printed in *Musical America:* "I have been obliged to refuse all invitations to visit America because of my delicate health, and now I am growing old I am afraid it will be too late. Still, if you are able to make me the following proposal: —

"Thirty concerts within about three months at $2,500 per concert. Deposition delivered to C. F. Peters, editor [publisher] of music in Leipzig before my leaving Europe. Accompaniment by your manager. All expenses for three persons from Europe and back again paid. Then I will consider the matter."

He knew that he would not survive such an effort, and therefore made the terms practically prohibitive. A profit of $75,000 in three months

would have been more than the amount he left at his death (about $65,000). Good music is not very profitable, unless it is operatic. To a Viennese journalist who met him in a theatre at Christiania after the two hundredth performance of Lehar's sensationally successful operetta "The Merry Widow" Grieg said: "I think I can say truly that my music, too, is played all over the world. But all my compositions have not brought me in much more than Lehar's income from this operetta in Christiania alone." [1]

The turbulent ocean had as much to do with his refusal to visit America as his ill health. To one of his American visitors, who had begged him to come over, he said with a twinkle in his eye that he would do so if he could get a guarantee that the Atlantic would behave itself; "but," he added, "it must be a written guarantee."

It was doubtless because of his horror of sea-sickness that he never made the trip to the North Cape.

[1] Grieg lost much money through his uncertain health, which often compelled him at the last moment to disappoint the public. How much did he get for participating in a concert? In January, 1906, he wrote to Röntgen: "I do not perform at a foreign concert for less than 1000 marks (about £50). A public appearance puts me into a state of such colossal nervous excitement that I prefer to avoid it unless it enables me to demolish an unlimited amount of oysters." In May of the same year he refused £150 for an extra concert in London. "It is possible," he wrote, "to buy money too dearly. Health is more important."

Regarding his last summer some interesting details are given in E. Markham Lee's little book on Grieg.[1] They were supplied by the talented young Australian pianist, Percy Grainger, with whom Grieg established a warm friendship in England, and of whom he said that "he plays my Norwegian peasant dances as none of my own countrymen can play them. He has the true folk-song poetry in him, and yet it is quite a way from Australia to Norway."

In July, 1907, Mr. Grainger was a guest at Troldhaugen for three weeks. "Grieg was really ill during the whole of Grainger's visit, his asthma being troublesome, but he seemed no worse than he had been for some years past. His energy, too, was amazing. He would insist on rowing them all about in his little boat on the fjord, and even ran to get in the boat first, so that no one else should seize the oars. In driving he was quite firm in not allowing any one to descend from the carriage. One result of his asthma was that he could not walk and speak at the same time. When he spoke, therefore, he would stand still in the middle of the road, his companions also stopping. With the last words of his sentence he would trot off again, quite unexpectedly, leaving his friends to follow."

[1] London: George Bell and Sons, 1908.

On the third of August he took his friend up a mountain near Bergen called Blaamanden. The climbing was a great effort for Grieg, but the glorious view on top compensated the toil. "Here we need a peasant fiddler to play a dance for us!" he exclaimed. But this exaltation was followed by a moment of depression in which he exclaimed prophetically "I shall never get up here again." He knew the end was approaching. When his friend Röntgen, who visited him about this time, left, he said to him: "I feel it distinctly that we shall never meet again. My strength is used up and it cannot last much longer. We must say farewell."

"Hospital in Bergen, August 28, '07" is the ominous heading of a letter to his Swiss friend — perhaps the last letter he ever wrote. He had once more yielded to temptation. Invitations from England asking him to conduct a Grieg programme at the Leeds Festival were so urgent and cordial that he accepted them; but instead of taking the steamer to Christiania he had to be conveyed by order of his doctor to the hospital. "I was and still am ill," he writes; "during the last few days, indeed, I have suffered so much from insomnia and difficulty of breathing that I had to come here. For this reason pen and ink had to rest too. There

GRIEG. PERCY GRAINGER. MRS. GRIEG. RICHTER

is much I wish to write, and also to thank you for your last letters: but my condition forbids it."

On arriving at the hospital he said: "This, then, is the end" — the same words which Schubert uttered before he became mute forever. During the night of September 3 his life ebbed away. Toward morning he fell asleep and awoke no more. Heart failure ended his life; but the autopsy showed that every internal organ was in such a terrible condition that it seemed little short of a miracle that he had lived so long. He who had given pleasure to thousands upon thousands had had to endure the tortures of a Prometheus for decades.

Probably no composer has ever been so universally known and beloved by his countrymen as Grieg. A letter addressed simply "Edvard Grieg" and dropped in any letter box in the most secluded part of Norway would have been forwarded promptly to Bergen. A touching article illustrating this universal affection appeared in a Christiania journal after his death: "When the news was received, the whole city was moved by a tremor of awe. The report spread with lightning rapidity and aroused everywhere grief and consternation. We noted the deep impression made on all passers-by when they saw the cross under Grieg's name on our bulletin

board and the flag at half-mast. It was a lovely morning, and one could see people going joyously to their work as usual, absorbed in their thoughts. But as soon as they saw the bulletin board in the window their expression changed. All stood still; the merchant forgot his business; workingmen who had been talking loudly, suddenly became mute; a young lady with a roll of music under her arm turned pale; laughing and gossiping servant girls became silent. For they all know his name, the lowly as well as the exalted. It is as if all had a part in him; the grief over the esteemed departed unites all Norwegians into one large family."

The city of Bergen claimed the privilege of honouring him with a funeral, but yielded it on request to the State of Norway. In accordance with Grieg's desire his body was cremated. The funeral took place at Bergen on the ninth of September, the first part of the service being held in the Museum of Art. A graphic and touching account of the funeral was written by the eminent violinist Adolph Brodsky, an intimate friend of the departed. It appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, and is herewith reproduced:

"The most imposing and the most impressive feature of Grieg's funeral was the crowd. In my

Last Photograph of Grieg

estimate there must have been between 40,000 and 50,000 people. There was no cold curiosity, no fighting for places, no stretching of necks to see better; from old man to urchin, all had the same grave expression of face which showed that they felt their loss.

"The programme of the ceremony, which was to begin at noon, was as follows: (1) 'Varen' ('In Spring'), by Grieg, played by the string orchestra; (2) Folk-song, by Grieg, sung by the male choir; (3) the laying down of the wreaths; (4) song for male voices, sung by the same choir, also composed by Grieg; and (5) 'Funeral March' for orchestra, by Grieg. The orchestra was a scratch orchestra gathered from the theatre, music-halls, and amateurs; I offered my services as a violinist, and they were accepted. Halvorsen, conductor of the National Theatre, Christiania, conducted. He is the husband of one of Grieg's nieces and a former pupil of mine from the Leipsic Conservatoire. The Funeral March was composed by Grieg about forty years ago, on the death of his friend Nordraak (who had such a great influence on Grieg as a composer), and is written for a military band only. But the only available military band in Bergen is so miserable that Halvorsen at the eleventh hour

orchestrated it for an ordinary orchestra. And he did it so well, and the instrumentation was so completely in Grieg's manner, that it sounded as if it had been done by Grieg himself. It is a beautiful piece, a genuine 'Grieg,' and ought to become in its present form a standing piece on the repertory of the leading orchestras.

"There were fifty-seven wreaths, which had to be 'laid down' by nearly as many delegates; and the Kaiser's delegate, Legationsrat Sheller Steinwartz (himself a good musician and personal friend of Grieg), made the only long oration — and a beautiful one. The German Emperor's wreath came next after the wreath of the King and Queen of Norway, which was 'laid down' by General Nissen. Then came wreaths from the Storthing, from the Norwegian Government, from the municipalities of Bergen and Christiania, from the Imperial Chancellor, von Bülow; from the Royal Academy, Berlin; from the Queen's Hall Orchestra, London; from the Concert Gebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam; and from the Brodsky Quartet, Manchester. As I brought a wreath from the Brodsky Quartet, the committee asked me to take charge of the wreath of the Concert Gebouw Orchestra, which I did.

GRIEG ON HIS DEATHBED

*Photo by Jacobson, Bergen.*

"In German, I bade our dear friend farewell, and said that his works would remain to give him immortality so long as true and noble art endured. I and the other bearers then lifted the coffin and carried it outside to the hearse — a beautifully decorated car drawn by four black horses. So it stood visible to everybody. As we passed through the streets, the houses draped with flags, all the people uncovered their heads. The procession consisted of hundreds of deputations with standards inscribed with the names of the societies to which the deputations belonged. There were about 10,000 people in the procession. We who followed directly after the hearse were quite out of town when the end of the procession was still passing through the streets of Bergen. All the schools, all the shops, and all the mills were closed. Outside the town we passed through an alley of trees surrounded by the fjords and mountains; the view was overpowering. At a certain spot the hearse stopped, and the procession, with their standards, passed before the hearse, and every deputation lowered their standard before the coffin and passed on. It was nearly an hour before the last standard was lowered. Afterwards we drove to the cemetery, on a hill a few miles outside the town. Kaiser, King, government,

towns, professional musicians, students, workmen, peasants — they all were united and led by one idea — to do homage to the remains of Grieg."

Among the many messages of condolence received by the widow was one from the German Emperor: "I express to you, on your husband's death, my most sincere sympathy. Him and his art I shall never forget, nor will his countrymen, or the Germans. May God give you consolation in your grief. I have charged my Ambassador to represent me at the funeral, and to lay upon the bier a wreath in my name."

The Nordraak march was played at Grieg's funeral in accordance with his own wishes as expressed in a letter to the music dealer Rabe in Bergen dated December 29, 1904, in which he said: "I wish to be buried in my native town, and I desire that at the interment my Nordraak funeral march — which I always carry with me when I travel — be played as beautifully as possible."

Grieg's burial place is as romantic, as Norwegian, as his music. Projecting into the fjord there is a steep cliff, visible from Troldhaugen; it is about fifty feet high, and half-way up there was a natural grotto at a point which can be reached by water only. In this grotto, selected by himself for this

GRIEG'S TOMB

*Photo by H. Nic. Meyer, Bergen.*

purpose, the urn containing Grieg's ashes was deposited some weeks after the funeral ceremonies, the mourners being conveyed to the spot in boats. The grotto was then closed for all time and a stone slab with the simple inscription "Edvard Grieg" was cemented in the cliff to mark the spot. "There looking out over the beautiful lake, in the midst of pine trees, with only nature for his companions, the rough, rugged Norwegian nature that gave him birth and whose beauties he had made known to the world in his music — there he wished to lie, and there he lies," wrote Mrs. Charles Cahier, who visited the widow not long afterwards. "Below us, on the edge of the water, were two workmen shoveling broken stone into the water by the landing-place. We were told that Grieg wished to be alone there, and that was being done to prevent boats from landing."

## CHAPTER X

### Orchestral and Chamber Music

WHILE the majority of Grieg's works are songs and pianoforte pieces, there is yet a goodly supply of orchestral and chamber music. The "Grieg Katalog," printed by C. F. Peters in Leipsic, contains a list (incomplete) of nine works for orchestra: Overture, "In the Autumn," op. 11; "Two Elegiac Melodies" for string orchestra, op. 34; "Norwegian Dances," op. 35; "Holberg Suite" for string orchestra, op. 40; "Peer Gynt Suites," I and II, op. 46 and 55; "Two Melodies" for string orchestra, op. 53; "Sigurd Jorsalfar," op. 56; "Two Norse Melodies" for string orchestra, op. 63.[1]

The orchestration of these pieces (op. 35 is by another, Hans Sitt) reveals Grieg as a consummate master of the art of painting delicate yet glowing colours on his canvas. These colours are more like those of Schubert and Dvořák than like those

[1] To these must be added the "Old Norwegian Romance with Variations," opus 51, and the "Lyrische Stücke," opus 68.

of Berlioz and Richard Strauss; in the visual world they have an analogue in the ethereal yet brilliant beauty of the Santa Rosa (Shirley) poppies created by Luther Burbank of California, the floral reformer, which elicit "ohs!" and "ahs!" from all who see them. Originality, too, is manifested by Grieg in this department of music as in all others. Professor Prout, in his standard work on orchestration (Vol. II, p. 254) strongly urges students to examine as being "particularly instructive" the "Holberg Suite," written for pianoforte and arranged by the composer for orchestra, by way of learning "how much alteration may sometimes be necessary in orchestral transcriptions of pianoforte music." In another place he cites the Andante Doloroso (Aase's Death) from the first "Peer Gynt" suite, where the opening theme is repeated very loudly, and remarks: "Here we have five-part harmony; and a strange and very unusual effect is obtained by the *f* and *ff* for muted strings. The mutes are almost invariably employed only for quiet passages." [1]

[1] In listening to Grieg's orchestral works and arrangements the ear is ravished particularly by the lovely and varied colour effects he secures with strings alone. Saint-Saëns has truly remarked: "By the way in which a composer makes the quartet speak we recognize the great master — the goddess is revealed by her gait." Rudolf M. Breithaupt has aptly called attention to the fact that in our day (when an orchestra of over a hundred is often demanded to express trivial thoughts) many com-

"*Peer Gynt.*" — Inasmuch as this "Peer Gynt" music has probably done more than any other work of Grieg to make his name known in musical circles, it is proper to begin our bird's-eye view of his compositions with it. The genesis of this music, and the first performances of it in connection with Ibsen's drama, were referred to in a previous chapter. As that drama, for the reasons given, did not appeal to theatre-goers outside of Scandinavia, Grieg very wisely combined four of the best numbers into a suite for orchestra, which was published in the late eighties; it made a sensation, is a favourite to-day, and will remain so for many years to come. Subsequently, four other numbers were issued as Suite No. II. These suites are seldom played without one number or two being redemanded; the music is here so exquisitely beautiful, there so wild and realistic, that it carries its own message; yet it gains a new significance if we know the situations for which it was written, wherefore a thumb-nail sketch of the plot will be in place here; with its aid the reader can easily place the eight numbers of the suites by their titles.

posers might profit by studying Grieg's art of "producing great orchestral effects with the simplest means." Dr. L. A. Coerne speaks in his "The Evolution of Modern Orchestration" of Grieg's orchestration as "tender, fervent, weird, brilliant, stormy, popular, effective."

Peer Gynt is a rough Norwegian peasant youth, who, in the first act, drives his mother Aase (Ohse) to distraction by his fantastic talk and ruffianly actions. His dream is to become emperor of the world. Everybody dreads and avoids him. He hears that the beautiful Ingrid is to be married, goes uninvited to the wedding, and carries the bride into the mountain wilderness. The next day, deaf to her laments, he deserts her, after taunting her with not having the golden locks or the meekness of the tender-hearted Solvejg (Sōlvigg), who, at the wedding, loved him at sight, notwithstanding his ruffianly appearance and behaviour. After diverse adventures, Peer finds himself in the Hall of the Mountain King, where he is tortured by gnomes and sprites, who alternate their wild dances with deadly threats; he is rescued at the last moment by the sound of bells in the distance, which make the hall of the goblins collapse. Then he builds a hut in the forest, and Solvejg comes to him on her snow-shoes of her own free will. Weeping, she tells him she has left her sister and parents to share his hut and be his wife. Happiness seems to be his at last, but he is haunted by the gnomes, who threaten to torment him every moment of his life, whereat, without saying a word to his bride, he

leaves her and returns to his mother. Aase is on her death-bed, and soon expires in his arms. Later, he turns up in Africa, where he has divers adventures. Having succeeded in stealing from robbers a horse and a royal garment, he goes among the Arabs and plays the rôle of a prophet. He makes love to the beautiful Anitra, daughter of a Bedouin chief, and elopes with her on horseback; but she, after cajoling all his stolen jewels from him, suddenly turns her horse and gallops back home. In the last act, Peer Gynt, after suffering shipwreck on the Norwegian coast, returns to the hut he has built in the forest: there he finds Solvejg faithfully awaiting his return, and dies as she sings the tearful melody known as "Solvejg's Cradle Song."

One need not go so far as Dr. Hanslick, who wrote in 1891: "Perhaps in a few years Ibsen's 'Peer Gynt' will live only through Grieg's music, which, to my taste, has more poetry and artistic intelligence in every number than the whole five-act monstrosity of Ibsen." There is, no doubt, much that is "monstrous" and repulsive in this drama, yet there is also much that is highly interesting, poetic, and realistically suggestive of Northern scenery and legend, while the death of Aase and the love of Solvejg are moving episodes worthy of a

great composer's best efforts; they inspired Grieg to tone-poems, which, in their way, have never been surpassed. As for the conservative Dr. Hanslick, his growing enthusiastic over a contemporary composer (apart from Brahms) was such an unusual thing that his brief and apt characterisation of the four numbers of the first suite may also be cited: "1. The prelude to the fourth act, Morning-mood; a pleasing idyll with dancing lights of flute-trills on the gentle uniform wave-movement. 2. The dainty dance of the slender Bedouin's daughter, Anitra; charming in invention, and orchestrated with magic art. 3. A sorrowful quiet adagio in A minor, on the death of Peer Gynt's mother; the simple, song-like melody made more impressive by some felicitous harmonies. Finally, 4. The immensely characteristic, clumsily baroque dance of the dwarfs in the cave of the 'Troll-Princess.'"

To fully appreciate the strikingly original and ineffably beautiful "Peer Gynt" music one must, of course, hear it with orchestra, but the composer's excellent version for the piano is also very satisfactory. Open the first suite in this pianoforte version (Peter's edition) at p. 6, and ask yourself if there is anything more exquisite in melody and harmonic sequence in all Schubert — or all any-

body — than the first five bars. There is something in that music which haunts me — and I am sure it must haunt others — like a vision of paradise obtained in a dream. "Morning Mood" is its title. "There is a faint sound in the air as of distant bells, mingled with the tinkling of cowbells, and an echo of a mountain jodle: it is Sunday morning on the sunlit fjord," in the words of Dorothea Casselmann-Schumacher.[1] Of Aase's Death she says: "Beside depicting the passing away of the woman Aase, the music seems also to have a symbolic suggestion: the dying of nature in the autumn, far up in the North, the disappearance of the sun for months, leaving this globe in a ruddy darkness."

In Anitra's Dance there are wondrous bars — the first twelve on page 10 — which seem to contain the quintessence of all that is blissful and ecstatic in love — the "voluptuous mystery" of the East. The music is European in its rhythms and exquisite melodies, yet by some strange magic of genius Grieg seems to give it the very atmosphere of the tent in the wilds of Morocco where the Arab girl enchants Peer Gynt with her beauty and her graceful movements. The strings alone are used:

[1] See her poetic article on "Edvard Grieg als Schilderer der Nordischen Natur" in the Berlin *Tageblatt* of April 10, 1907.

Grieg did not need an orchestra of a hundred players to create an exotic atmosphere.

The fourth number of this suite, "In the Hall of the Mountain King," is also a kind of dance, but of an utterly different character. It takes us back to an earlier scene. Peer Gynt, having refused to marry the Mountain King's hideous daughter, is pursued by the spiteful gnomes and sprites, who lead him a chase which grows wilder and wilder, the orchestra repeating the theme "with almost maddening persistence." The music, with its ever-increasing whirl and vivacity, its steadily increasing loudness and rapidity, is a masterpiece of realism. This number is, as Walter Niemann has aptly remarked, "a specimen of musical impressionism the equal of which can be found only in certain Russian and Finnish works. Its effect is so great that it is seldom played without having to be repeated." This is true in America as well as in Europe; the music grips all hearers with the irresistible force of a cyclone. The climax comes at the end in a grand crash representing the collapse of the hall at the sound of distant church bells.

As a matter of course Grieg selected the best four pieces for the first suite; yet when there was a call for a second, he had plenty of material left for

another suite almost equal in value to the first, the extreme popularity of which has, however, kept the other in the background. The first number represents Peer Gynt carrying off the bride and the agitation among the wedding guests. Ingrid's Lament follows: a piece which is not only interesting as music, but suggests a genuine operatic vein. The Arabian Dance, which comes next, though quaint and pretty, is not so seductive as Anitra's Dance; it accompanies the movements of her companions. Its orchestral colouring, with triangle and piccolo, suggests the Orient. Most impressive is the agitated piece depicting the storm and shipwreck on Gynt's return to Norway. There are also in this suite arrangements of two vocal numbers: "Solvejg's Lied," one of the most popular of Grieg's songs, a monologue in which Solvejg vows she will wait faithfully for Peer's return; and the celestial "Cradle Song" of Solvejg, which I would not give for all the songs of Brahms, Hugo Wolf, and Richard Strauss put together.[1] The creative thrill of delight which Grieg must have felt when he penned the last twelve bars of this

[1] Some reviewers of the first edition of this book accused me of saying that this song is worth more than all the songs of Brahms, Wolf, and Strauss. But I never made such an absurd statement; I simply expressed a personal preference.

song — which have not their equal in more than twelve other songs ever composed — surely atoned for all the disappointments of his life. This death-song closes the quasi-operatic score of "Peer Gynt," and if there is, excepting "Tristan and Isolde," an opera which has a more deeply emotional or a more sorrowful ending, I have not heard it.[1]

To M. Monastier-Schroeder, who wanted to know how many musical numbers there were altogether in "Peer Gynt" and where they came in, Grieg replied in a letter dated April 1, 1905:[2]

"I am unfortunately not able to answer your letter as you wish. I have neither time nor strength to do so. I am still very weak after a serious illness. I will nevertheless try to answer some of your questions, as far as possible. I fortunately have by me the Reclam edition of Peer Gynt. Ibsen's work is a masterpiece of the first rank, which unfortunately you cannot perceive from the lamentable translation. That I want to impress upon you above all things. The only interesting thing the translator has done is the preface, which I call to

[1] "Solvejg's Lied" is in the third Grieg Album for voice, Solvejg's "Cradle Song" in the fifth. The reference, in this book, is always to the Peters edition.

[2] This letter was first printed, in the original German, in *Die Musik* (Berlin: Jahrgang 7, No. 2); it is reprinted in the German translation of the first edition of this biography of Grieg.

your attention specially . . . I will now, following the Reclam edition [Nos. 2309–2310], give a list of the places with music:

1. Before the first act, an introduction, entitled, 'In the Marriage Court.' Printed in op. 23 for four hands (by Lose in Copenhagen).

2. Page 25. At Peer Gynt's reply, 'They play for a dance,' a halling (dance) from the introduction is heard behind the scenes.

3. Page 26. A musician, a peasant fiddler, sits on the stage and plays now a halling, now a spring-dance (unpublished).

4. Page 34. Before the beginning of the second act, entr'act music, called Peer Gynt and Ingrid. Printed in the second Peer Gynt suite (op. 55) as 'Ingrid's Lament.'

5. Pages 38–39. Three Dairy-maids, is a complete piece of music. The girls sing, Gynt speaks in the intervals (unpublished).

6. Page 42, below. Peer Gynt jumps on the boar's back; as he rides off, a short piece of music (unpublished).

7. Page 43. In the Hall of the Mountain King. Printed in the first Peer Gynt suite (op. 46). In the stage performance the music begins as a prelude, and at the big ff (letter B in the score of the suite)

the curtain rises as the responses of the court trolls are sung. (The vocal parts are not printed in the suite.)

8. Page 46. Play and dance. Printed in op. 23 for four hands (by Lose in Copenhagen; for orchestra by Peters op. 55.)

9. Pages 49–50. After the response of the Mountain King, 'I am sleepy; good night,' a melodramatic scene, with chorus (unpublished).

10. Pages 50–52. Melodramatic scene between Peer Gynt and the 'Voice' (unpublished).

11. Before the third act, as an introduction, 'Aase's Death' is played. (Printed in the first 'Peer Gynt' suite, op. 46.)

12. Page 63. When Peer Gynt speaks the words 'Lass, Mutter, uns ohne Zaudern' . . . we hear 'Aase's Death' behind the scenes pianissimo — so softly that the music seems only an indefinite sound, which does not disturb the dialogue. The music continues to page 67, ceasing suddenly when Peer utters the words 'Hör auf mit deinem Geprater.' It can be so arranged that the musical piece ends here.

13. Before the fourth act, a short prelude (unpublished). Instead of this, there was played at the performance the 'Morning Mood,' though

this was really composed for page 83 ('Morning Dawn').

14. Page 83. A thief and a receiver of stolen goods; scene for two voices (unpublished).

15. Page 87. Chorus of maidens. Printed in the second suite as 'Arabian Dance,' but without the voice parts. The middle section, in A minor, should be sung by Anitra.

16. Page 89. The maidens dancing. Here is played Anitra's Dance (printed in the first suite). The music is conceived as an accompaniment to Peer Gynt's monologue: 'Ei wie die Beine gehen wie zwei Trommelstöcke,' and should therefore be played behind the scene pianissimo.

17. Page 91. Peer Gynt's serenade. Published only in Denmark by Wilhelm Hansen in a piano score.

18. Page 101. A summer day in the far north. Solvejg's Song. Printed with a pianoforte accompaniment among my songs (Peters Album No. 25); also as an orchestral piece in the second suite.

19. Page 113. Introduction to the fifth act. Printed in the second suite. The connection with Solvejg's Song by the woodwind, however, belongs only in the suite.

20. Pages 133–135. Night; a wooded heath, deso-

lated by a fire. Melodramatic scene with chorus behind the scenes (unpublished).

21. Page 151. Church-goers singing on the path through the woods (unpublished).

22. Page 154. Solvejg's final song. Printed among the songs with piano accompaniment (Peters Album No. 60)."

Grieg concludes his remarks on "Peer Gynt" with these words: "I hope the time is not distant when a complete vocal score, or even a complete orchestral score, of the entire music to 'Peer Gynt' may be published, perhaps with the connecting text." On August 22, 1903, he wrote to the same friend: "You are quite right: it is a pity that the whole 'Peer Gynt' score is not published. But the publisher has printed the two orchestral suites and the songs and does not wish to compete with himself." [1] Three years later he wrote:

"It is a long time since I wrote the 'Peer Gynt'

[1] A year after his death the full orchestral score of "Peer Gynt" was published by C. F. Peters, and it is now possible to produce all this music in the concert hall. It should be done, however, only in connection with the declamation by a good actor, of such parts of the Ibsen drama as are necessary to elucidate the music. There are five extended numbers in the score that are not included in the suites. One of these, "The Dance of the Mountain King's Daughter," closed the second suite at first; but after conducting it at a concert, Grieg decided to omit it, and he wrote a letter to Röntgen (February 9, 1893), in which he strongly urged him to leave out this number and close the suite with the *Lied* in A minor.

music and the Ibsen songs. So long that I conduct and play these works as if they were not by myself. I desire to develop further, and have done so inasmuch as I now feel differently. How glad I would have been to give expression in tones to my mental development at the present time! Bodily ailments have been insuperable impediments. And now the end is near. However, I am resigned."

"*Sigurd Jorsalfar.*" — If Grieg never wrote an opera, this was due less to a lack of inclination than to his weakened bodily frame, which would have made so sustained an effort dangerous, if not fatal.

There is much that is genuinely dramatic, not only in "Peer Gynt" but in several scores for which Björnson furnished the poetic basis: "Sigurd Jorsalfar," "At the Cloister Gate," "Recognition of Land," "Olaf Trygvason," and "Bergliot." Concerning "Sigurd Jorsalfar," Grieg wrote in the *Festschrift* which appeared on the occasion of Björnson's seventieth birthday: "The play was to be produced at the Christiania Theatre after such a short preparation that I was allowed only eight days to write and orchestrate the music. But I had the elasticity of youth, and it went." Björnson was not present at the first production (1872), but he was at its revival the following May. It was any-

thing but a good performance; the music must have been literally "executed," for the composer relates that he suffered such tortures when Hammer, who was a good actor, began to sing, that he would have been glad to hide himself, and instinctively he bent over more and more, cowering in his seat, until Björnson poked him in the ribs and said, "Sit up properly." "I started as if stung by a wasp," Grieg added, "and thenceforth to the end I behaved myself and sat motionless on the scoffer's chair." Nevertheless the occasion was a triumph, and after the performance the two authors went to Björnson's and lunched on some "delicious old cheese." The children, too, came in, exclaiming, "Just think, we were up in the 'paradise,' and we saw papa and Grieg come on the stage!"

"Sigurd Jorsalfar" (Sigurd the Crusader) is not one of Björnson's chief works, but it is, as Grieg wrote to me, "a folk-piece in the best sense of the word, and is often performed on national holidays." In its version for pianoforte solo it consists of three numbers: an Introduction, an Intermezzo ("Borghild's Dream,") and a Triumphal March.[1] This

[1] The reference is to No. 2655 of the Peters edition. No. 2486 contains the score, and 2488 the pianoforte version, of two songs from "Sigurd Jorsalfar" for solo, male chorus, and orchestra, "The Nordland People," and "King's Song."

third piece is one of the most superb marches in existence, equalled only by the marches of Schubert, Wagner, and Tchaikovsky. It is one of the longest of Grieg's pieces and one of the most stirring. Rich in melody, original in harmony, superbly orchestrated, it could be made as popular as the first "Peer Gynt" suite which it quite equals in inspiration. "The Triumphal March from 'Sigurd Jorsalfar'" says Dorothea Casselmann-Schumacher, "brings before our eyes the weather-beaten song-loving hordes of Normans who joyously greet the Prince and with crashing shields waken the echoes of the mountains. How many daring but well-motivated tone-combinations are contained in this powerful march, in which the lyrical elements are quite crowded out by the dramatic and the heroic!" The *Piu mosso* beginning on page 12 (of the version for piano solo) is one of the most exquisitely tender episodes in all musical literature; a melody rivalling Schubert, the greatest of all melodists, at his very best. Yet how few know this sublime march! What a pitiable spectacle to see the millions eating acorns when they might have ambrosia! And the most aggravating thing about it is that the public would really prefer the food of the gods if it were only allowed to taste it.

Professional musicians are the professional enemies of good music.[1]

Concerning the first and second numbers, A. E. Keeton remarks (*Temple Bar*, vol. 113):

"His incidental music to Björnson's 'Sigurd Jorsalfar' is wonderfully in character with the dramatic story of the adventurous Norwegian crusader. To those who are fond of comparisons, it may not be devoid of interest to view its intermezzo, 'Borghild's Dream,' beside Elsa's vision in Wagner's 'Lohengrin'; the two composers' ideas of a woman's love-dream are curiously divergent; both, though, have seized the possibilities of a simple scale as a means of expressing an emotion. With Wagner the dream would seem to float upwards, soaring ever higher and higher; with Grieg it tends to descend, as from heaven to earth." [2]

"*Bergliot.*" — This work, which some consider the most inspired of Grieg's compositions, belongs in the same class as Schumann's music to Byron's "Manfred," being a melodramatic vocal and or-

[1] During twenty-seven years of service as a musical critic I have heard this splendid march played only once by an orchestra. Yet it is in every way equal to Tchaikovsky's "Marche Slave," which we hear so often. It can be played effectively on the Aeolian Orchestrelle, on which, also, "Anitra's Dance" is peculiarly charming.

[2] For a more detailed analysis of the "Sigurd Jorsalfar" music (all of which is published), see Schjelderup and Niemann's book on Grieg, pp. 145–148.

chestral accompaniment to a Björnson poem, the content of which is thus given (for use in concert programmes) in the printed score:

"In the 'Harold Hadradis Saga,' towards the end of chapter 45 it is written: When Einar Thambarskelvir's wife Bergliot, who had remained in the inn at Trondhjem, heard that her husband and son (Eindride) had fallen, she at once went up to the royal castle, where the peasant army was, and ardently incited them to battle. But at that moment the King (Harald Hardradi) came rowing down the river. Then said Bergliot: 'Now we miss here my cousin Hakon Ivarson; Einar's slayer would not row down the river if Hakon stood here on the bank.'"

While "Bergliot" was composed in 1870 or 1871, it was not orchestrated and published till nearly two decades later. It reveals, like the declamatory parts of some of Grieg's songs, a pronounced dramatic instinct for the right thing. The most interesting part, musically, is the funeral march, toward the close of which there is what seems like a vague anticipation of the Titurel march in "Parsifal." With a great Wagnerian actress to declaim the text, this melodrama ought to be remarkably effective.[1]

[1] A French admirer of Grieg, Henry Maubel (Maurice Belval) seems to consider "Bergliot," with its "harmonies noires d'une plénitude

"*In the Autumn.*" — Of the works for orchestra alone, the overture, "In the Autumn," is the earliest. It was written at Rome in 1865, and is based on the realistic and very effective song, "Autumn Storms" (opus 18), which was composed earlier in the same year in Denmark. It has been stated that the overture was rewritten two decades later, but this is an error; only the orchestration was altered, so the composer informed me: "Die Conception ist überall die ursprüngliche." The orchestra naturally provides more powerful means than the piano and voice for painting the trees as they are being despoiled of their leaves by the storm winds as well as the ensuing longings for spring; and the composer has made good use of his opportunities, showing himself a master of the art of reaching a climax. Concerning this overture, Mr. H. E. Krehbiel remarks:

"The circumstance that the first phrase of the introduction (which is often recurred to in the development of the allegro) is amusingly like the beginning of 'Yankee Doodle' in a minor mode,

admirable," the composer's masterwork. See the pages (71–73) he devotes to it in his "Préfaces pour des Musiciens." (Paris: Fischbacher.) It is worthy of note that Grieg put the "Bergliot" on the programmes of his last orchestral concerts in Berlin (April 12 and 14, 1907), as well as in London (May 17, 1906). See also Schjelderup and Niemann, pp. 148–151.

is a little disturbing to that seriousness with which a larger work by a sterling composer ought to be approached; but it does not preclude admiration for the original and ingenious orchestral effects which fill the work. The spirit of the piece is unmistakably Norse, and its humour is mixed with that melancholy which seems inseparable from the rugged physiognomy of nature in the north country."

To his Swiss friend Grieg wrote regarding this piece: "In the overture the contrasts, poetic as well as musical, are formed by the motive from the song which represents the autumn storm and the merry reaping song of the peasants. There is no suggestion of the coming spring in the overture; but there is of a union of the serious and merry elements which characterize the autumn."

"*Holberg Suite.*" — In 1884 the Scandinavians celebrated the two-hundredth birthday of Ludwig Holberg, the founder of modern Danish literature, who has been called the Molière of the North, although, as A. E. Keeton has remarked, "his purpose and aims were of much deeper import than can be ascribed to the brilliant and satiric comedy writer of France." Gade contributed to

this jubilee an orchestral suite, "Holbergiana," while Grieg commemorated his fellow-townsman with his Holberg Suite for string orchestra "in ye olden style." Dr. Hanslick's comments on this composition are of interest, the more so as that Viennese critic seldom had a good word for his contemporaries:

"A refined, happily conceived (*geistreiche*) work, less pretentious and exotic than the compositions of this Norwegian are apt to be. The antique is cleverly reproduced in the forms, rhythms, ornamentations, yet filled with the modern spirit. Charming is the air in G minor, with its gentle, easily soothed melancholy; while the Rigaudon dance, which effectively closes the suite, is full of vivacity and humour. Georg Brandes says, in an excellent essay concerning Holberg: 'Whatever he produces he treats from the merry point of view. Seldom is there any other than a happy mood, very seldom a trait of melancholy, once only a touch of pathos.' Of this characterisation of Holberg we were reminded on listening to the suite of Grieg, which likewise takes life easily and makes our enjoyment easy."

Grieg himself once referred to this work jocosely

as a "peruke piece." It is beautifully written and evinces (as is noted on another page) his absolute mastery of musical form.[1]

### *Orchestrated Songs and Piano Pieces*

On account of his persistent ill-health Grieg was seldom in a creative mood during the last two decades of his life, yet there were hours when he longed to exercise his artistic faculty. On these occasions he followed the example of Liszt and other great masters of arranging his piano pieces or songs for orchestra and his orchestral pieces for piano, two or four hands. It is fortunate he did this, for no one else could have made these translations, either for piano or for orchestra, in his delightfully idiomatic and racy manner.[2] Exquisitely refined in their colouring are the "*Two Elegiac Melodies for String Orchestra*," opus 34. The songs are entitled, "Spring Tide" and "The Wounded Heart."

[1] For the Holberg festival Grieg also composed a Holberg cantata for male voices, *a capella*. In a letter to J. Röntgen he gives an amusing account of how he expected to conduct this piece in the open air under an umbrella, amid snow, hail, and storm. He anticipated catching a fatal cold, but adds: "Well, that's one way of dying for one's country!" He subsequently destroyed this cantata.

[2] The Grieg Catalogue published by Peters mentions these diverse arrangements. The "Norwegian Dances," in opus 35, were orchestrated by Hans Sitt. There is also a "Fjeldslaat," orchestrated by the Landgrave of Hesse, nephew of Queen Louise, which has been played at a Philharmonic concert in Copenhagen.

The profound melancholy of the poems explains the solemn strains of the music, but as there are no explanatory verses to go with the orchestral versions Grieg deemed it advisable, as he informed me in one of his letters, to elucidate these by changing the titles to "The Last Spring" and "Heart Wounds." [1]

Of great beauty also are the "Two Melodies for String Orchestra," opus 53 (versions of his songs "Norwegian" and "First Meeting," and "Two Norse Melodies" opus 63 ("Im Volkston," "Cow-keeper's Tune and Peasant Dance"). The melody of "Im Volkston" is by F. Due. These songs have become more widely known in their lovely orchestral garbs than as *Lieder;* yet they ought to be played ten times oftener than they are. There is more substance, beauty, and emotion in the two Elegiac Melodies than in many an oft-repeated symphony.

A piece of great interest, unknown as yet to most music lovers, is the "Old Norwegian Romance with Variations," opus 51. Grieg wrote this unwisely for two pianos, thus practically excluding it from the concert hall as well as from most homes.

[1] Beside translating these songs entirely for orchestra, he also made orchestral accompaniments for others of them, including "The Swan," "Monte Pincio," and "Solvejg's Cradlesong."

But in 1907 he arranged it for full orchestra and it was promptly played in London by Henry J. Wood, in Berlin by Arthur Nikisch, at a Philharmonic, and in many other cities at memorial concerts after Grieg's death.[1]

"*Lyric Suite.*" In a letter to Grieg, in 1903, I called his attention to the fact that Anton Seidl had, some years previously, orchestrated four of the piano pieces of opus 54 and conducted them at a Metropolitan Sunday concert, where they were much applauded. Grieg was greatly interested and asked if I could procure him an opportunity to see Seidl's version. I communicated with Mrs. Seidl, who informed me that the score was at that time in the hands of Frau Professor Thode in Heidelberg. I wrote this to Grieg, and a few weeks later I got a letter from him, dated Christiania, February 26, 1903, in which he said:

"Accept my best thanks for your trouble in making me acquainted with Anton Seidl's orchestration. Frau Professor Thode has sent me the orchestral parts of a so-called Norwegian suite comprising four numbers. I heard it played a few days ago by our capital orchestra and find much that is

[1] For an excellent analysis of this piece see Schjelderup and Niemann, pp. 121–122.

excellent in it. Here and there my intentions have not been carried out, and my question now is, will the widow allow me to make the changes called for. Without them I cannot send the pieces to Peters, but with them I should be glad to do so. There is absolutely no hurry. I shall not get time till next summer to take up this matter. I hope I am not making too many demands on my health with the result that I shall not be able to do anything! For I have to conduct concerts in March and April at Prague, Warsaw, and Paris, which for me is a great deal to undertake at once. Please give my best greetings to Seidl's widow. She will understand, I trust, that I can esteem Seidl's work highly and yet desire to change some things in accordance with my intentions."

In a subsequent letter Grieg said: "Seidl's orchestration was undeniably very good from his point of view, but too heavy (*dick*) for my intentions. The whole Wagnerian apparatus was used for my mood pictures, which did not suit me in all cases." He also wrote: "As a matter of course I shall take the whole honorarium offered for this and send it —through you — to Seidl's widow. I regret to say that such orchestrated piano pieces are very insufficiently paid for in

Germany. But I shall try to get as much as possible."

With the consent of the widow (to whom he subsequently sent 1,000 marks) he then proceeded to orchestrate these pieces in his own way, and the printed score has a note reading: "This suite owes its existence to the late Anton Seidl, the Wagner conductor, who was the first to orchestrate the numbers 2, 3, 4 [Norwegian Peasant March, Nocturne, March of the Dwarfs]. This orchestration was, however, subsequently completely changed and made over by the composer." [1]

The *Lyric Suite* comprises four pieces, the plaintive, idyllic "Shepherd Lad"; the rustic and characteristically Norse "Ganger," or "Peasant March"; the dreamy "Nocturne," and the superbly Norwegian and Griegian "March of the Dwarfs," the wild and fantastic main theme of which is interrupted by one of those tender and exquisitely modulated melodies, the secret of which Grieg, almost alone among all composers, seems to have inherited from

[1] It would be interesting and extremely instructive to hear the two versions at one concert. Grieg substituted the "Shepherd Lad" for the "Bell Ringing" which formed part of Seidl's suite. In a letter to Röntgen, dated February 10, 1903, Grieg also referred to the great joy he felt on receiving from New York a new suite by — himself. He praises Seidl's orchestration as excellent "ganz vorzüglich," and looks forward to having the piece played by Halvorsen's orchestra.

Schubert — a *cantabile* which, nevertheless, differs from Schubert's as widely as the scenery of Austria does from the fjords of Norway.

This suite was on the programme of Grieg's last orchestral concert in England, on May 17, 1906. In New York it was first played by the Philharmonic Society under Wassily Safonoff on January 25, 1907.

*Chamber Music.* In the realm of chamber music Edvard Grieg, with his five works, would not count for much if quantity were the criterion of excellence; but qualitatively he belongs in the first rank. In the concert halls of the future it is safe to predict that no music of this class will be played more frequently than his superb string quartet and his no less admirable sonatas for piano and violin.

Of these violin sonatas there are three (op. 8, 13, 45, and they are as different from one another as three Wagner operas. The first of them excited the admiration not only of Gade, but of the censorious and ultra-academic Fr. Niecks, who wrote regarding it (in 1879) that it seemed to him to be "Grieg's supreme creative achievement in the larger forms. It calls up in our imagination scenes such as the composer was surrounded by in his youth — the seaport town leaning against high mountains

of rock, the Byfjord, and the main beyond. We are in the open air with a bracing breeze about us. Amid these invigorating influences that dilate the whole being, body and soul, the meaning of the interval of the ninth at once reveals itself. The interval of the eleventh, which occurs in the second bar of the first subject, is only a more potent interpreter of the same feeling. Smoothly the boat glides onward, the water rushing and splashing along its sides. Now we are in the open sea" [so he got out of the fjord after all!], "a wide expanse bounded only by the horizon. . . . The remaining portion of the working-out section pictures the whistling and roaring of the storm, the upheaving of the waves, the creaking and groaning of the vessel. . . . The first movement tells us of the action and the struggle with the elements, the second of rest and home enjoyments. The *Allegro quasi andantino* is an exquisite *genre* picture to which the national colouring gives a peculiar charm. It represents a scene full of contentedness, good-natured humour, and playfulness; it is a harmony without a false note in it. With one rush the last movement takes us again into the midst of the bustle of life. Here are vigour and fire in abundance, but also contrasting pensive passages are not want-

ing. Grieg may be seen in this movement gloriously soaring on the wings of chords of the ninth."

The second violin sonata Niecks does (or did) not like so well as the first, but the full-blooded Griegites like it better, for the same reason that the Wagnerites like "Tristan and Isolde" better than "Lohengrin"; there is more of the essence of Grieg in it. The first sonata is, as Schjelderup remarks, the work of a youth who has seen only the sunny side of life, while the second is the gift to the world of a man who has also shivered in the cold mists of night, and has learned the meaning of grief and disappointment.

"The tragic nature of his home overwhelms the artist. For this reason the second sonata is in a deeper sense much more Norwegian even than the first; for a Norway without tragedy is not a complete Norway, but only a part of the varied impressions which this mighty dreamland gives to him who can understand the language of nature."

Although betraying everywhere a complete mastery of the art of orthodox construction, the composer allows himself a freedom of style which is a token of his modernity and originality.

While Grieg composed a master-song like "I love thee" at almost as early an age as the bio-

graphic dates of Schubert's "Erlking" and Mendelssohn's overture to "Midsummer Night's Dream," his genius nevertheless matured and deepened gradually, as is strikingly shown by the third of his volin sonatas, opus 45, dedicated to the painter Lenbach — a work, as Lawrence Gilman remarks, "built greatly upon great lines . . . The mood, the emotion, are heroic; here are virility, breadth, a passionate urge and ardour. With what an intensity of grieving Grieg has charged those wailing chromatic phrases, for the violin and piano in imitation, in the working-out section of the first movement! and the C major passage in the last movement, with its richly canorous theme for the solo instrument against arching arpeggios in the accompaniment, is superb in breadth and power." Even more enthusiastic than this American critic is the French, Ernest Closson, who writes regarding this sonata:

"It must be classed with the most inspired scores ever written. It is, in our opinion, the work of Grieg which most truly deserves to be called grand. From beginning to end it is a marvel of inspiration, intelligence, independence. The art of the people is here, once more, largely placed under tribute [?], but with harmonies of a boldness and a delicacy

that are admirable. Finally, there is, what contributes not a little to the grandeur just referred to, a simplicity, an austerity, a sort of classicism within modernity in the final movement. Had Grieg composed nothing but this sonata it would suffice to hand his name down to posterity."

In the sonata for violoncello and piano (op. 36), which is dedicated to the composer's brother, there is also much that is fascinating — so much that one regrets that Grieg did not write more for that warm-toned instrument. The last movement, in particular, is a gem both as regards invention and Norse colouring. The well-known Boston violoncellist, Wulf Fries (whom Rubinstein chose as his associate in America), was so fond of this sonata that he wanted more of the same kind, and wrote to the composer, who replied: "I, too, am ill. Allow me therefore to express myself briefly; and — in Norwegian, which I hope you still understand. Unfortunately, I have written nothing whatever for 'cello since the sonata in A minor. What has appeared of mine, later than that, for this instrument is arranged by the late Goltermann. They are chiefly small pieces. Publisher: C. F. Peters, in Leipsic."

First in rank among the chamber-music works

is the splendid quartet, opus 27. The orthodox conception of a quartet is that it should address itself solely to the intellect, making as little appeal as possible to the senses and the feelings. It is a foolish ideal, but unfortunately most compositions of this class follow it with pedantic conscientiousness, which is the reason why chamber music is the least popular branch of the divine art. Grieg, fortunately, did not aim at this kind of unpopularity; his quartet, while replete with thoughts, is as beautiful sensuously and as deeply emotional as Schubert's D minor quartet (with the heavenly variations on "Death and the Maiden") and Smetana's touching autobiographic "Aus Meinem Leben." It was written, he informed me, at a time when he sought rest in the country after his soul had been harrowed by heartrending experiences. "That the natural surroundings also play a rôle in the music is self-evident," he wrote. While the first motive in the quartet is borrowed from one of his own songs ("The Minstrel's Song"), it is not true that, as even his Norwegian biographer erroneously states, he has helped himself to folk-tunes: "alles ist erfunden, nichts benutzt" — "all is of my own invention — I borrowed nothing." There is something deeply pathetic in the recurrence in the

quartet of more or less veiled allusions to the exquisitely melodious and melancholy song just named. The opening and closing movements are haunted by it in the most entrancing manner, and it also serves to give organic unity to this composition. The Romanza has a unique grace, tenderness, melodic and harmonic charm while the intermezzo is enlivened by the Halling rhythm. I have heard that Romanza at a Kneisel Quartet concert when the players were obliged to rise three times to acknowledge the demonstrations of pleasure.

The antics of the academic critics over this quartet are amusing. Dr. Hanslick, whom we found enthusiastic over the "Peer Gynt" and "Holberg" suites, draws the line at the dissonances in opus 27. He admits that "every movement in this quartet is full of life and 'go,' the romanza, indeed, written in the most agreeable folk-mood, being so charming that we even pardon its uncouth middle part"; but the discords! "the composer betrays a truly childish pleasure in everything that sounds ugly, and when he has hatched out a particularly juicy dissonance, he clings to it for dear life."[1]

[1] Dr. Hanslick wrote in the same vein all his life regarding those Wagner dissonances which, like Grieg's, delight most modern music lovers. He seems to have really suffered physical agony. When Antonin Dvořák was living in New York I once happened to talk with him about

Other critics of the academic persuasion have found Grieg's quartet sinfully unascetic and unchambermusic-like because it "goes beyond the proper sphere" of such music by a quasi-orchestral richness of colouring here and there. Schubert, the greatest of the chamber-music writers, and Dvořák have been censured for the same trait, incredible as it may seem. It is one of the funniest things in the history of musical criticism. If it is considered a marvel of genius when a Liszt, a Rubinstein, or a Paderewski overcomes the inherent tonal limitations of the pianoforte and suggests diverse other instruments, is it not also a token of genius to be able to overcome the monotony of four stringed instruments and make the hearer wonder if a horn or oboe player is not concealed somewhere? Why should progress in the art of varied colouring be debarred from chamber music when it is welcomed in the orchestra?

Among the uncompleted compositions left by

the famous Viennese critic, when he sat down at the piano and played a series of discords. "Do you like these?" he asked. "I think they are delicious," I replied. "I like them too," he said, "but Hanslick thought them dreadful and begged me not to use them." As regards the quartet, Grieg was sensible enough to take a humorous view of Hanslick's strictures. He wrote to Röntgen that he found it uncanny that Hanslick practically praised some of his pieces, adding: "Fortunately, he thoroughly demolished the string quartet."

Grieg the most important was a quartet in F major. The allegro and scherzo (the only parts finished) were played first at Copenhagen, and the critical verdict was that here was a composition without which the musical physiognomy of Norway's greatest composer would lack an important trait. Probably goaded by the assertion often made, particularly in Germany, that Grieg *could* not write in the "strict" or "orthodox" style, he has here written a piece of chamber music (this refers particularly to the allegro) as correct and learned as if fashioned by a committee of seven German professors. Yet it is Grieg through and through. The scherzo is a sort of "Troll's frolic," which set the audience wild and had to be repeated. Julius Röntgen wrote: "The quartet forms a complete contrast to the well-known G minor quartet (op. 27), both in content and in form. The first movement is written quite in the classical quartet style, and from this formal point of view gives the impression of deliberate intention. Of the fantastic, passionate style of the first, 'Norwegian,' quartet, which departs so widely from the usual quartet manner, there is not a trace; everything is clear, serene, and lovely, more Danish than Norwegian."

The first two movements were performed in

New York for the first time on December 15, 1908, by the Kneisel Quartet. The fact that Grieg never wrote unless he had something worth while to say is illustrated once more by the allegro vivace and the allegro scherzando. The first movement may be, as Röntgen thinks, more Danish then Norwegian, yet this music is as unmistakably Grieg's as the face on his photographs. Certain melodic intervals, harmonic progressions, and modulations represent the intials E. G., stamped on every page of the score. The scherzo is equally individual, but it has a more pronounced Norwegian aspect, being a merry sort of *springdans*.

A few weeks later (January 19, 1909) the Kneisel Quartet played the remaining two movements, which were still in manuscript. The andante is mostly Grieg, whereas the final allegro, with the exception of the themes, is by Julius Röntgen, than whom no other living composer was so well qualified for the task of elaborating these themes. Röntgen's own works include a Jotunheim suite, inspired by fjord and mountain scenery, which the composer once played to Bjornsön, who exclaimed: "De ar jo Norsk!" ("Why, you are a Norwegian!") Röntgen completed the unfinished quartet so much in the spirit, both individual and national, of Grieg

that, had the facts not been made known, few would have guessed that these last two movements were the product of two master minds. The andante is a gem; it has modulatory turns that are unmistakably Griegish and a melody that haunts the memory after a single hearing. The finale has a fine rhythmic energy — Röntgen knew how to pair in it the wild with the tender, quite à la Grieg.[1]

[1] Among the copied manuscripts left by Grieg there was also an andante for piano, violin, and violoncello in C minor, dated June 17, 1878. "Whether Grieg would have published this trio fragment is doubtful; the musical value of the movement in any case justifies its being printed," wrote Dr. Röntgen in *Die Musik*, VII, 5.

## CHAPTER XI

### Compositions for Pianoforte

THE A minor concerto for piano has perhaps done more even than the "Peer Gynt" suites to establish the fame of its composer. As it has been referred to repeatedly in the preceding pages of this book, a few more words must suffice. It was composed in the Danish village Sölleröd, when Grieg was twenty-five years old, and is characterised by a juvenile freshness of invention combined with mature technical skill and a polish that few artists acquire so early in life. Possibly Schjelderup goes too far in declaring that this "wonderful concerto is perhaps the most perfect amalgam of piano and orchestra ever achieved by a tone-poet": but it is certainly a model in the way in which it avoids both of the common defects of being either a symphony with pianoforte accompaniment or a show-piece for the soloist with orchestral accompanist. It is, above all things, good music — delightful music, provided it is played by one who understands its deep poetic spirit. Pianists

whose chief aim is to astonish the natives with their digital dexterity should (and do) avoid it. Since Liszt had his enthusiasm aroused by it, in 1870, many thousands have been affected in the same way. Not all, to be sure. F. Niecks wrote in 1879: "It presents a strange mingling of the pathetic with the grotesque. In deportment and style nothing can be more unlike classical dignity and development of thought." But Professor Niecks himself wrote nine years later that this concerto is "life itself in its press and stress"; adding that Grieg "is a true poet and has added another string to our lyre." The world moves and Liszt foresaw in what direction it would move.

The Grieg concerto is now a classic, an inevitable number in the repertory of all the great pianists. Its best interpreter is Pugno, who not only reveals all its poetic, sentimental traits but imparts to its last movement the "ginger" which, as Hans von Bülow intimated, the Norwegians have in common with Americans. The first movement is replete with beautiful, haunting melody, and nothing could be more lovely than the orchestral introduction to the slow movement — one of the saddest preludes ever written — a prelude illustrating Grieg's gift of creating an emotional atmosphere with the sim-

plest means — a gift which, as Rudolf M. Breithaupt has remarked, would be useful to many a contemporary composer. Grieg knew full well that he had given the world an immortal work, and he continued to improve it to the end. Only a few months before his death Percy Grainger found him rescoring it in part for the Leeds Festival, the main object being to add parts for a second pair of horns. His friend Johann Selmer also refers to changes in orchestration and form that Grieg introduced in this concerto in his last years, particularly in the energetic folk-dance which constitutes the last movement.

The "Ballade in G minor," opus 24, with variations, is by many of Grieg's admirers considered his masterwork for piano solo. In 1904 he wrote to his Leipsic publisher that he remembered how he had, many years previously, played this piece to Dr. Abraham with great anxiety, as he feared he would not like it. He was surprised when the famous publisher answered: "A great, serious work, which I shall be glad to secure, because it will still further enhance your fame." It did so, in course of time, although, as W. S. B. Mathews has justly observed, "it is not a piece to be liked at first hearing, even when played in a very masterly manner."

GRIEG AND DE GREEF, THE BELGIUM PIANIST

It belongs to the Greater Grieg, and requires study for a full appreciation of its recondite and subtle charms, although the beautiful, plaintive theme itself makes a deep impression at once. The sombre spirit of the theme pervades some of the variations; others suggest features of Norwegian landscapes, of dance and national hymn, and there is a grand climax in which the orchestral resources of the piano are exhausted. Walter Niemann calls this Ballade "the most perfect musical embodiment of Norway and the Norwegian people, of its agonized longing for light and sun, and at the same time the most perfect embodiment in music of Grieg the man."

Brahms was a warm admirer of this Ballade, as Röntgen informs us.

Of short pieces for the pianoforte Grieg has given to the world over a hundred, many of which are as artistic specimens of workmanship and polish as any Japanese vase. Sixty-six of these, fortunately, can now be had for a few shillings in one volume, comprising the ten sets of lyrical pieces ("Lyrische Stücke," edition Peters). The opus numbers (12, 38, 43, 47, 54, 57, 62, 65, 68, 71) indicate that these pieces represent every stage of their composer's creative activity, from the earliest to the latest.

Gems of the first water are to be found in all of these periods; the later one includes such jewels as No. 41, "Homesickness"; 42, the dainty "Sylphe," with exquisite modulations; 48, the quaintly archaic yet modern "Gratitude"; 47, the joyous, expectant "Homeward"; 49, the sturdy rustic "Peasant's Song"; 53, the exuberant, brilliant "Wedding Day at Troldhaugen"; 57, the highly poetic "Evening in the Mountains," with its subtle suggestion in the opening bars of rustic motives in Wagner's operas — the Shepherd's tunes in "Tristan" and "Tannhäuser"; 58, the exquisitely delicate and dreamy "At the Cradle," a marvel of beauty. These and their neighbours have, for the most part, not yet found their way to the concert halls, but their time will come, as they are not in any way inferior to the earlier and more familiar numbers, among which the best known perhaps is the "Berceuse" (9), concerning which Dr. William Mason wrote drolly: "Grieg's baby — a robust little fellow, with a touch of temper, and a pair of healthy lungs, which he does not hesitate to use upon occasion — is evidently at home in the cottage of a peasant. . . . The cradle is rocked here in a different manner. Binary and ternary rhythms combined, and strong melodic and harmonic contrasts of sudden

occurrence, bear the impress of Grieg's personality."

As it is not the object of this volume to comment on the weaker products of Grieg's pen, but only to call attention to his best pieces, we may proceed to mention some more of these sixty-six lyric pieces to which we must, in Bædeker fashion, affix two stars: the dainty "Butterfly"; the "Solitary Traveller," Grieg in every bar; the equally characteristic, deep-felt "In my Native Country"; the deservedly famous and popular "Eroticon"; the celestial "To the Spring," with its ravishing left-hand melody and a superb climax; the pensive, mildly melancholy "Valse Impromptu"; the superb "Album-leaf," of rare originality, and as wondrous in its harmonic and contrapuntal miniature work as Bach or Franz; the quaint and ravishingly Griegian "Melodie"; the rustic, exciting, fascinatingly harmonised "Springdans" (28); the plaintive "Elegie," another sample of the Norwegians' art of making every harmonic voice melodious; the doleful tune of the "Shepherd Boy"; the whirling, boisterous "Peasant March" (31); the altogether delightful "March of the Dwarfs," a striking musical embodiment of Norse folklore; the "Notturno" (33) with exquisitely dreamy harmonies; and, the quaintest and most

daring of Grieg's audacities, the "Bell-Ringing," a most ingenious imitation on the piano of the shrill overtonal dissonances of a church bell. This piece seems to have amazed even some of the Griegites, one of whom remarks that "the succession of parallel fifths in the piece entitled 'Glokkenklang' is too much even for the *fin de siècle* ear of a hearer thoroughly imbued with the spirit of modern music." We have seen, however, that the great Wagnerian conductor Anton Seidl admired it so much that he made an orchestral version of it. Caviare to the general, his composition is to the connoisseur one of the most remarkable examples of programme music in existence. It is interesting to note that the same "Glokkenklang" opens the Peasant Dance of opus 63, and occurs elsewhere in his works, quite frequently.

Grieg's critical sense and good taste are manifested in the fact that there is an almost unprecedently large proportion of high-class pieces in the collections of his compositions. The trivial, the banal, the commonplace are remarkably rare. In my copy of the "Lyrische Stücke" there are only half-a-dozen that are not marked with at least one star of excellence. Each player will, of course, do his own "starring"; but it is well to bear in mind

that this music, simple and easy though much of it is, must not be judged at a first hearing. Some pieces in my copy that were at first unmarked now have two stars! No two amateurs will agree in all cases as to where the stars and the double-stars belong; but all will find that the stars grow more and more numerous on acquaintance, as they do on a dark night if we gaze intently at the sky. Delicacy of touch and tenderness of feeling, however, are absolutely necessary if one would get acquainted with the best there is in these pieces.

One of the most remarkable traits of Grieg is that although he had an invalid body nearly all his life, his artist soul was always healthy; there is not a trace of the morbid or mawkish in his music, but, on the contrary, a superb virility and an exuberant joyousness such as are supposed to be inseparable from robust health. The tenderness just referred to is not incompatible with this sturdy virility; tenderness is a modern trait of the best manhood; Homer's heroes had none of it. An exquisite specimen of this tenderness belonging to the composer's last period is that ravishing piece, the second of the Cradle Songs (No. 58). Another example, of the more dreamy kind, is the still later "Peace of the Woods" (No. 63, op. 71), which is

like a nocturne written by Chopin after playing Grieg for an hour. From first to last, indeed, the Chopin influence is the strongest in Grieg: much stronger than the Schumann influence, which is noticeable only in the earliest stage. Some of the titles suggest Schumann's method ("Butterfly," "Shepherd-Boy," "Gade," "Secret," "Once upon a Time"); but whereas Schumann found the poetic titles for his pieces after they were written, there is every reason to believe that Grieg always had his subjects in mind first; the realism of his music attests that.

Concerning the three pieces entitled "In my Native Country," "Home-sickness" and "Homeward," Hermann Kretzschmar has aptly remarked that whereas the first is simply an expression of feeling, in the others that longing is overpowered by the "memories of home which the composer's energetic virile imagination conjures up in a thousand tones." Norway, indeed, is the playground to which Grieg ever returns. Here are Hallings and Spring-dances and Marches of Dwarfs, and Wedding Marches, and Peasant Songs, and other superlative specimens of Norse music, all, of course, *Grieg's own invention.* This fact must be emphasised. In an essay on Grieg which disfigures an American

book, the preposterous statement is made that between the fiftieth and the seventieth of his opus numbers "there is little but representation of Norwegian tunes." As a matter of fact, 64 and 66 are the only two of these opus numbers in which borrowed tunes are used; the other eighteen are not only Grieg's own, but they include some of his masterworks. Because of his ill-health, he wrote less in the later decades of his career than in the earlier ones; but there was no falling off in quality.[1]

As previously intimated, there is probably more of the Norwegian national colouring in Grieg's pianoforte pieces than in his other works. The theorists have used their spectroscopes to analyse this local colour, but in doing so they have not made clear what is Norway's and what is Grieg's. The bold leaps in the melody, the sudden changes in the rhythm, the commingling of major and minor, the frequent ending on the fifth instead of the tonic, the brief themes, the "rude rusticity of bare fifths,"

[1] Dr. Johnson, on being asked by a lady what had made him define a certain word in his dictionary in such and such a way, replied: "Ignorance, madame, sheer ignorance." If certain critics were equally frank in their confessions, their picturesque and exhaustive ignorance regarding Grieg and his works would fill a volume almost as big as the doctor's dictionary. One of the most eminent musicians in America said to me, in the year 1908, that Grieg never orchestrated his music! He might as well have said that Berlioz and Wagner never orchestrated theirs.

are common to both, but the striking harmonic idiosyncrasies are Grieg's own. The most elaborate discussion of them is contained in a book previously referred to, Georg Capellen's "Die Freiheit oder Unfreiheit der Töne und Intervalle," wherein twenty-six pages are devoted to an analysis of the first twenty-nine of the "Lyrical Pieces." The author contends that "a really satisfactory theoretical explanation of Grieg's music in accordance with the methods now in vogue is unthinkable, and has not even been attempted, so far as I know." Whatever one may think of Capellen's own system, he deserves credit for calling the attention of scholars and students to the extraordinarily varied originality of Grieg's harmonic progressions. Yet these wonderful new discoveries in the realm of harmony the myopic critics have sneered at as "mannerisms"! Mozart, too, was in his day accused of having mannerisms; but he retorted with imperturbable good humour that if his compositions assumed a form and "manier" that made them unmistakably Mozartish, it was with them, presumably, as with his nose, which was of a certain size and curve that made it Mozartish and unlike that of other people.

"The realm of harmony," Grieg once wrote to

me, "was always my dream world." He named Bach, Mozart, and Wagner as his teachers, and continued: "Wherever these immortal masters express the deepest feelings, I have found that they show a preference for chromatic progressions, each in his own way. With these as a basis I gradually developed my own conception of the significance of the chromatic element. Many of my songs illustrate my method — for example 'A Swan' (Album III, No. 30) and especially No. 33 'Geschieden.'"

In one of his letters to Röntgen there is an amusing reference to his harmonizing of a number of folk-tunes sent him by his friend Frants Beyer: "I have indeed put on paper some hair-raising harmonic combinations. By way of excuse I may say that they did not originate at the piano but in my brain. When one has the Voringfos at his feet one feels more independent and daring than one does down in the valley."

In point of time, Debussy and Richard Strauss come after Grieg, yet in boldness and novelty his harmonic combinations and progressions are quite as advanced as theirs, if not more so, for which reason I have not hesitated to repeat in this volume the statement I made in *Songs and Song Writers*

(1900) that Grieg has created the latest harmonic atmosphere. His dissonances have the advantage of always being a means to an end, never an end in themselves. He always uses discords for epicurean flavouring and never flings handfuls of cayenne pepper or "pots of paint" (as Ruskin would say) in the public's face. "The extraordinarily bold harmonies of Grieg are," as his countryman Schjelderup has remarked, "closely connected with his nationality and have nothing in common with the manufactured originality and search for new combinations which we find in the case of so many modern composers," and which, I may add, are usually the result of an attempt to hide the absence of novel melody. "Compact of a want of melody and the direst discords" is the apt definition of this "latest" phase of music given by an English critic. To this "latest" school Grieg does not belong, for he is always melodious; but in the matter of discords no one has gone beyond him.[1]

[1] Grieg's song, "At the Brookside," is as weird and lawless as anything in Debussy, but its dissonances are paired with a beauty of melody of which Debussy has not the secret. I shall never forget the transport of delight which overcame me when I first played the unearthly harmonies of Grieg's "Ein Freundschaftsstück" (False Friendship). It was like a glimpse of another planet. "The Mother Sings" is also a good sample; but it is less in the songs than in the piano pieces that Grieg exercised his dissonantal boldness. Here we come across an endless variety of unresolved discords, unusual solutions of the dominant

As no one can hear a Bach fugue or a Chopin mazurka or a Wagner opera without exclaiming: "That is German and Bach — Polish and Chopin — German and Wagner" — so no one can hear a piece or song by the great Bergen composer without exclaiming: "That is Norwegian and Grieg."

We smell the salt breezes of the fjord, mingled with the fragrance of the pines, and yet we feel that we are at Troldhaugen, Grieg's home.

To change the figure: the silk of which Grieg's pieces are woven is dyed in the national colours, but the silk itself is his own production. The hall mark of his individual genius is visible on all of the Norwegian folk-tunes arranged by him and incorporated in op. 17, 35, 64, 66, 72. In transplanting these to the keyboard of the pianoforte he seemed to divine the harmonies latent in the popu-

seventh, altered seventh and ninth chords, parallel fifths and fourths, augmented intervals, protracted organ-points, sequences of shrill dissonances, quaint cadences on the fifth, and so on. The reader who wishes to analyse the Grieg harmonic atmosphere may be referred to op. 72, No. 4, a Halling which is full of new effects, especially in the tranquillo. See also the Gangar, No. 6, and the Springdans, No. 13. In No. 3 of opus 28, the use of a secondary ninth chord (Peters edition, p. 9, bar 2), is particularly Griegish; so are the dominant ninths on a tonic pedal on p. 11. In the "Lyrical Pieces" (complete: Peters edition), attention may be called to page 40, line 3, bar 2; p. 47, l. 2, b. 4; p. 50, l. 1, b. 5; p. 54, l. 3, b. 5, 6, 7; p. 66, l. 2, b. 9; p. 150, l. 3, b. 2–3; p. 192, l. 1, b. 3, etc.; p. 196, l. 1, b. 1 (very weird). See also the Part Songs for men's voices and Grieg's swan song, the Psalms, which show that he preserved his harmonic originality and boldness to the very end.

lar tunes. In other words, he made his harmonies as unconventional as the borrowed melodies, writing chords and modulations such as the peasant originators of these melodies would have used had they got as far as the harmonic stage of music — and had they been men of genius.[1] Only a genius of the first rank could have written, for instance, the ravishingly beautiful harmonies on page 5 of the Norwegian Dances, op. 35, in the version for pianoforte solo; a page which alone would suffice to make its author immortal. (I suspect that the melody in this cantabile also is by Grieg, although the germ of it may be in op. 17, p. 20.) To get this piece at its best it should be played in the original version for four hands.

Much of the other music has been arranged for four hands by the composer himself, who has shown a special gift for this, which is rare even among the greatest masters.[2] For two hands, too, Grieg has arranged many of his own works not written for

[1] An interesting application of Grieg's method to the tunes of the North American Indians may be found in some of the songs of the talented American composer, Harvey Worthington Loomis.

[2] See Peters's Grieg Katalog, p. 14, for a list of these arrangements, and read what is said on this point regarding Schubert, Grieg, and others on p. 259 of Eschmann's "Wegweiser durch die Klavier-Literatur"; a guide for the pianist, which also classifies Grieg's pianoforte pieces according to their difficulty. A similar task was performed by W. S. B. Mathews in *The Musician* of November, 1907 (Boston: Oliver Ditson Co.)

pianoforte, and in doing so he has shown a skill equalled only by Liszt. Everywhere and always he makes the piano speak its own purest idiom, except when — again rivalling Liszt, who transferred the sounds of gypsy instruments to the pianoforte — he lets you hear, seemingly, the Norse fele, langleike, or lur. As a German critic has remarked, whatever he has written for pianoforte "ist handlich und fingerig, griffig und spritzig, singt und klingt." He is as idiomatic as Chopin.

Among the best arrangements are those of some of his songs (four sets, issued as op. 41 and 52). One of these, it is true, marks a temporary aberration of taste: the pianistic embellishment of "The Princess" is not in harmony with the spirit of that lovely song. Such lapses occur in the works of most of the great masters, Beethoven included, in cases where the theme of an adagio or a funeral march is decorated with showy variations.

Grieg was harshly criticised for another of his arrangements: his adding of a second piano to several of Mozart's pianoforte sonatas, in order, as he said, "to give them a tonal effect appealing to our modern ears." Only a pedant can object to such a proceeding, which helps to reawaken interest in neglected works of the old masters. As Grieg

explains in his splendid article on Mozart in the *Century Magazine* of November, 1897, he did not change a single one of Mozart's notes, and he could see no reason why one should raise an outcry over his desire to attempt a modernisation as one way of showing his admiration for an old master.

Beside the sixty-six Lyrical Pieces for piano and the arrangements of original works and folk-songs, there are a considerable number of separate pieces and collections, among them the fanciful "Humoresken," op. 6; the popular "Albumblätter," op. 28;[1] the "Valses Caprices," op. 37 — all of these being concert-hall favourites. On the whole, one may say of the Grieg piano pieces, as of his songs, that the best of them — those constituting the Greater Grieg — are much less known than the others. As formerly in the case of Schumann and Chopin, and more recently in the cases of MacDowell and Paderewski, the professional pianists have either ignored the Grieg pieces entirely or played only those which give them opportunity to display their technical skill, neglecting

[1] Concerning the fourth of these "Albumblätter," Röntgen cites these words of Grieg: "While I was composing it I suddenly heard soft music in the distance, and presently some players in a boat were rowed past me in the fjord. The strains were in wonderful harmony with my piece and inspired its middle section."

those of which Niecks has said that they "make us hear, see and feel, sea and land, woods and heaths, flats and mountain-tops, fresh breezes, thick fogs, rocking waves, flapping sails, merry dances, melancholy musings, wild rollickings, stories of heroes and goblins, etc., etc." Here, surely, are things in abundance to interest the public and bring it back to the half-deserted concert halls. In winter, when people are stifled in stuffy overheated rooms, these pieces, with their suggestion of the wild, picturesque, bracing out-door life, would delight young and old, women and men. They would also serve as an antidote to the secessionist music of our day, which taboos melody. Here is the true musical manna! Truly, the neglect of this superbly musical and at the same time popular music by the professional pianists is a mystery. In view of this neglect, one cannot but sympathize with Dr. Riehl, whose favourite sentiment was: "I love music, but I hate musicians."

The eminent French baritone, Maurice Renaud, once said to me: "Les musiciens n'aiment pas les chefs-d'œuvres" — "musicians do not love masterworks."

No professional musician, so far as I am aware, paid the slightest attention to the last collection of

Grieg's pianoforte pieces, opus 73, which appeared three years before his death. Yet among these seven pieces there are some which exemplify Grieg's genius in its ripest phase, and all have melody, atmosphere, and quaint harmonic turns. They are aptly named "Stimmungen" ("Moods"), and there is a great diversity of them. The first, "Resignation," is a weary languorous reverie with which the second forms a sharp contrast: it is a "Scherzo Impromptu," a merry dance, spiced with coquettish accents. No. 3, "A Nocturnal Ride" is genuine Norse music, in Grieg's most mysterious vein — a sort of ballad, quite exciting in what, apart from the music, it suggests to the fancy. One would like to know something about this "Natligt Ridt" the composer had in mind: but Grieg's programme music is of the poetic kind which merely suggests, leaving details to the imagination, except when he imitates the sounds of nature and peasant life as reflected in folk-music. No. 4, "Folktone," is a popular air gathered at Valders, conceived in an exquisitely tender and devotional mood — one of those pieces by Grieg in which, as a German writer once said, a church suddenly looms up in the landscape. No. 5, "Étude," is a brilliant study, for expert players; No 6, "Students' Serenade," is a

charmingly simple piece in the style of Schumann's early period, when his creative fancy was freshest.

Perhaps the gem of this collection is No. 7, "The Mountaineer's Song," one of those delightful combinations of a quaint Norse folk-tune with those bold yet appropriate harmonies which only Grieg could write. What ravishing clang-tints are obtained by reposefully, lingeringly, holding the sustaining pedal through the bars where it is specially indicated! How exquisite the dying away of the sounds in the last ten bars! We are on the mountain top at night, alone with nature, in rapturous silence with the stars above. A two-star piece is this.

Among the posthumous works are three pieces for piano: "Drei Klavierstücke," which also are additions of lasting value to the Grieg repertory. The first, "Tempest Clouds," is a dazzling virtuoso piece; the second, "Procession of Gnomes," beginning with bell sounds, is a Norwegian march equal to the best in the "Lyrical Pieces"; the third, which has a reminiscent melody, is both *animato e feroce*. This, too, begins with those "bell ringing" bars which recur so often in Grieg's piano pieces, and in connection with which it is interesting to remember that Debussy's "revolutionary" dis-

sonances had their germ in the delight he took as a boy in listening to the lawless overtones of bells.[1]

[1] Debussy once wrote quaintly that Grieg's music gave him "the charming and bizarre sensation of eating a pink bonbon stuffed with snow," which is perhaps not quite so foolish as Hanslick's calling him "a Mendelssohn sewed up in a sealskin"; for Grieg, except in his earliest period, has little in common with Mendelssohn, who would have abhorred him because of his bold and lawless dissonances. Not Mendelssohn, but Chopin, Schumann, Wagner, and Liszt, were Grieg's idols and examplars.

## CHAPTER XII

### Grieg's Rank as a Composer

SOME years ago a musical periodical contained an amusing anecdote concerning the ambitious but unsuccessful German composer Bargiel. One day he asked a pupil what she had brought with her. She replied that it was a piece by Grieg. "What did you say? by Grieg?" exclaimed Bargiel. "But, my dear girl, Grieg is no music." The pupil was a Norwegian, and this was more than she could endure. "What!" she cried, "Grieg no music? Adieu, Herr Professor!" and with that she swept from the room like an offended goddess.

Not a few professional pedants in Germany, as well as in other countries, shared this supercilious attitude of Bargiel toward the Norwegian composer. Grieg was, indeed, so used to being belittled that when I once called his attention to the praise bestowed upon him by Dr. Hugo Riemann in his admirable "Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven," he replied, under date of January 16, 1903:

"Riemann's Musikgeschichte I have not read. It cannot possibly be true that I am praised in it! It reminds me of old man Hauptmann in Leipzig who, many, many years ago, on hearing the Meistersinger Vorspiel, exclaimed at one place: 'Stop! that must be wrong, for it sounds correct!'"

In the same letter he says: "I thank you for the expression of sympathy with my art which you continue to manifest. Your letters affect me so agreeably because every line breathes genuine, deep comprehension." This sympathy he seldom got from the critics, most of whom had fallen into the lazy habit, whenever they heard one of his pieces, of parroting a few foolish remarks about "Norwegian idioms," "miniature art," "lack of logical development," and letting it go at that. Very few took the trouble to acquaint themselves with those of his works which were not habitually played or sung in public. As late as 1903, when Arthur Nikisch conducted the first "Peer Gynt" suite at a Philharmonic concert in Berlin by way of commemorating the composer's sixtieth birthday, Leopold Schmidt wrote in the *Tageblatt:* "Grieg is to us the typical representative of the 'Northern' element in music — as such he has created a school

— but only a few of his works are really well known here."

Another German journalist wrote, after Grieg's death, in the Munich *Allgemeine Zeitung:* "Germany loved him — yet criticised him very severely. The vicious criticisms were always in his mind, and when I called on him, a few hours before his concert began, he had many bitter things to say about German critics. He also intimated that it was because of them that he avoided Germany for so many years when he was on his concert tours."

In other words, many thousands of Germans had these critics to thank for losing the opportunity to hear one of the greatest composers of the nineteenth century interpreting his unique works as he alone could interpret them. And why were these critics so censorious? What were their grievances?

They were four in number; first, that there was a lack of "logical development" in his compositions; second, that he could not write operas, oratorios, and symphonies; third, that there was too much of the "Norwegian idiom" in his music; and fourth, that he was too popular to be really great.

The third of these censures was disposed of on pages 125–134, where I showed that what was

mistaken for "idiom" was really Grieg's personality and his unique melodic and harmonic originality. But how about his other alleged shortcomings? Is there really a lack of "logical development" in his compositions? Fuller Maitland, editor of the new edition of "Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians," says that Grieg, "while setting his themes in such juxtaposition with each other as to bring out their beauties to the fullest extent, has not scrupled to modify the rules of form as it suited him best to do. That he chooses but rarely to develop his ideas according to a logical plan, is due to a personal preference, not to any want of skill in the art of development, for this quality is clearly to be seen in the prelude and other movements of his suite, 'Aus Holberg's Zeit.'"

Here we have a staunch champion of Brahms admitting that Grieg had plenty of skill in the art of development — a fact which any one can verify by an unbiased analysis of his sonatas and his concerto. What is misleading in Mr. Maitland's statements is the assertion that Grieg chose but seldom to develop his ideas "according to a logical plan." I have tried hard to find a lack of "logic" in his pieces, both long and short, and have failed utterly. He always allows his musical ideas

to crystallize into their own natural forms, and that, to my mind, is the perfection of logic in musical composition. The question of "development" is quite a different thing. Grieg did not often indulge in it to a great extent, and never in that voluble, interminable manner which many professionals seem to admire. But to this very fact his music will largely owe its immortality! He is not one of those composers who, in the words of Schumann, "*squeeze the last drop out of their themes and spoil their good ideas by tiresome thematic treatment.*" On the contrary, he followed the maxim of Mozart, who wrote: "Our taste in Germany is for long things; BUT SHORT AND GOOD IS BETTER."

"Short and good is better!" Had the composers who followed Mozart borne that in mind, more of them would be as popular as Grieg is.

One of the least inspired of Grieg's works is his early pianoforte sonata, opus 7. But even if not enamoured of it, one cannot but take its part against the charge that it "lacks organic unity" because there are "too many themes in it." The academic idea of a sonata is that it should be "organically evolved from a few principal motives"; but in this sonata, "if you look at the first movement, you will

find that the first part contains, beside the principal subject, five or six, one may say independent, groups, every one of which is distinguished by a phrase or motive of its own." That, certainly, does look dark for Grieg; and, what is worse, the same multiplicity of themes characterises other works of his in sonata form. It is absolutely inexcusable. What would you say if it had been customary for novelists, a century ago, never to have more than two persons in a chapter, and a modern iconoclast came along and put in five or six? Would not such a writer be abhorred by all decent people?

Seriously speaking, is not this fertility in themes an advantage, since it diminishes the danger of what Schumann called spoiling good ideas by too much thematic elaboration? That Frederick Niecks should have made the above objections (many years ago, it is true) is the more surprising since he himself admits on another page that a work may be "beautiful and truly artistic" without being written in what he is pleased to call "a strictly logical style." "Even in the larger forms," he adds, "a looser — what we may call a novelistic — treatment has its *raison d'être*."

Now, here was a truly luminous, in fact an epoch-making thought in musical æsthetics, which it is a

great pity Mr. Niecks did not develop, for his own benefit and that of his academic colleagues.

In music, as in other arts, variety of form is as desirable as variety of content and mood, and the composer who provides it should be praised, not censured. In his book on Richard Strauss, Ernest Newman has some amusingly caustic remarks on the harm that has been done to many composers by the slavish adherence to the so-called classical forms. "When one sees how many capable and promising musicians have been stunted in their growth by this system of Chinese compression, one wishes that somebody would write an exhaustive book on 'Sonata Form, Its Cause and Cure,' and present a copy to every student who is in danger of catching the disease."[1]

It is usually the worshippers of Brahms who are fond of contrasting their idol's "perfection of form" with Grieg's alleged shortcomings. But is Brahms flawless? To cite Ernest Newman again: "Any

[1] Clarence Lucas, in his book, "The Story of Musical Form" (pp. 162–3), analyzes Grieg's F major sonata for violin and piano, showing how he deviated from the usual practice, and adding: "It is just by such touches of genius as this that the great composers are able to produce such new and beautiful effects in the old forms. Grieg proved that the sonata form is not such an old bottle that it was incapable of holding his new wine."

"Form," said Edward MacDowell, "should be nothing more than a synonym of coherence."

one who looks at Brahms's symphonies, for example, with eyes unclouded by tradition can see that his form is often far from flawless. He is less a master of form than 'form' is master of him. He is like a man in whom etiquette predominates over manners; his symphonies behave as they have been told, rather than as they feel. . . . With Beethoven the form seems the inevitable outcome of the idea, as all first-rate, vitalized form should be; with Brahms the ideas are plainly manufactured to fit the form. The supposed necessity for pacifying this traditional monster is visible on page after page. It cramps Brahms in the making of his themes, which often show the most evident signs of being selected mainly because they were easily 'workable.'"

While Grieg was a great admirer of Brahms, nothing could have ever persuaded him to follow such a method. He was a master of form, but not a formalist.

The notion that Grieg cannot be placed in the first rank of composers because he wrote no symphonies and operas, next claims our attention.

Liszt remarks in his book on Chopin (1852) that "it has become customary in our days to regard as great composers only those who have written at least half-a-dozen operas, as many oratorios, and

several symphonies." Two decades ago Chopin still suffered from this disposition to measure genius with a yardstick or a stop-watch, and when I wrote my book entitled "Chopin and Other Musical Essays," I took the liberty of coining the word "Jumboism" to indicate this exaggerated, unreasoning respect for elephantine dimensions — an attitude which we find only in music; art critics never judge the value of a canvas by its size, nor do literary critics esteem a book according to the number of its pages — the contrary is apt to be the case. But to this day, if a composer writes a long symphony, no matter how dull it may be, the musical critics give it a column of comment, whereas a short piece or a new song, no matter how good, is lucky if it gets a line. E. Markham Lee's otherwise commendable little volume on Grieg contains some flagrant instances of this Jumboism. Two others of recent date may here be cited, one by an English, the other by an American writer: "At certain times between those early days and the present it was supposed by many people that Grieg's name would ultimately be written on the roll of the great classical masters; but such hopes, based on a very few experiments in the longer forms, have long since ceased to be generally cherished." "Among the Scandinavian

composers Svendsen is the one who most thoroughly mastered the larger forms.[1] Next to him in importance is undoubtedly Grieg."

This Jumboism was the bane of Grieg's life; he could hardly take up a newspaper without being informed in it that he was not one of the great masters because he had never written any great works — greatness being confounded with bigness in the most childish manner. And this brings us to the core of the question. The composing of an opera or a symphony is, of course, a respectable achievement — but is it that which, more than anything else, entitles a man to rank as a great genius? If so, than Lachner, Onslow, Pleyel, Macfarren, Ditters, Dorn, and a hundred other composers like them, must be placed in the first rank, for in the matter of structure and duration their operas or symphonies complied with all the demands of "logical form." But their works are now forgotten — why?

Let us put the matter in another way. Why is it that of Mozart's pianoforte sonatas so few have survived? Why are about a hundred of Schubert's songs so much more esteemed than the other four hundred and sixty-seven? Why are the odd num-

[1] He wrote two symphonies — which nobody ever plays!

bers of Beethoven's mature symphonies — the third, fifth, seventh, ninth — rated so much higher than the fourth, sixth, eighth?

Because Mozart's sonatas, while formally beyond reproach, are for the most part deficient in interesting ideas (he kept his best ideas for his operas, which, *therefore* — and not because of their form — have survived). Because the four hundred and sixty-seven Schubert songs, while equal in form to the other hundred, lack the ideas which have made those immortal. Because the odd Beethoven symphonies have greater ideas, and more of them, than the even ones; formally, there is no difference, all being masterpieces from that point of view. And to return to the preceding paragraph, Lachner and the others referred to are now forgotten because their mastery of form, their skill in constructing long operas and symphonies, could not make them immortal. *Ideas alone can do that;* those they lacked.

"Genius creates, talent constructs," wrote Schumann, thus indicating the superiority of the faculty of originating musical ideas to that of manipulating them. Schumann himself began, as Bülow remarked, as a man of genius, and ended as a man of talent. In the matter of construction, his

later works are superior to his earlier ones, but they lack the ideas which alone ensure survival.

There is no escaping from the lesson of these historic facts; they show that the professional critics, in estimating the rank of a composer, usually attach altogether too much importance to questions of form and duration. If it were really true that, as W. H. Hadow says regarding Chopin, "in structure he is a child, playing with a few simple types," that does not prevent him from being the greatest as well as the most popular of all writers for the pianoforte — the creator who, in the words of Saint-Saëns, "revolutionized the divine art and paved the way for all modern music." Of every hundred cultivated music-lovers in a concert hall, ninety-five have no more interest in the anatomy of music (form) than they have in botany when attending a flower show. To them, music is primarily an art (a matter of ideas, beauty, and emotion), not a science. Now Grieg's strength, as Professor Niecks has remarked, "lies in the freshness and novelty of his ideas." That is what makes him a genius, a musical creator. *Form can be taught and learned; the creating of fresh and novel ideas cannot; it is a gift from heaven; it is that which distinguishes genius from talent.*

A composer's rank is therefore determined by the number of original ideas he has contributed; and from this point of view — the only one endorsed by the history of music — Grieg belongs in the first rank of composers. None of the great masters has contributed more unique and charming melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic ideas in the same number of pages; none has written more idiomatically for voices and instruments; and none has succeeded better in expressing his thoughts in the most fitting manner. I defy any musician to take one of Grieg's mature ideas and give it a more artistic setting than the one he gave it. His workmanship is as unique as his ideas, and as delightful. He is a master jeweller as well as a producer of diamonds, rubies, and pearls.

One of the marginal notes in the copy of Schjelderup's Norwegian biography which Grieg sent me reads: "Unfortunately, the state of my health has made it impossible for me to write the larger works I longed to undertake." In a letter to his friend Röntgen he refers to this same longing in that quaint mixture of major and minor which characterises his correspondence no less than his music: "The very idea of a piece in six movements fills me with horror and envy! It is really true that illness

demoralizes the mind as well as the body. I am not even fit at present for orchestrating. Where the oboes should be I put the flutes, and where the violins should sing out I write a trumpet solo!"

At the same time, the bent of his mind was naturally toward the shorter forms. This is indicated by the fact that his opus 45, for piano and violin, was the last work he wrote in sonata form. For pianoforte alone he composed only one cyclic composition. Herein he followed the romantic spirit of the time, which demanded shorter, more concentrated pieces. Even the conservative Brahms wrote pianoforte sonatas only in the earliest stage of his career (op. 1, 2, 5); thereafter he composed ballads, rhapsodies, fantasias, intermezzi, and other short pieces.

Among the minor professionals and among the critics there are still some who are capable of exclaiming: "Yes, that humming-bird is very beautiful, but of course it cannot be ranked as high as an ostrich. Don't you see how small it is?" However, the number is growing of those who — to change the figure — do not fancy a painted house to be a greater work of art than a Japanese vase simply because it is bigger and more "universal." For my part, I am glad that Grieg put most of his ideas

into short forms. These gave him all the scope he needed. On this point Schjelderup has well said: "It is simply incredible, what an abundance of entrancing moods are to be found embodied, for example, in the Lyric Pieces for piano, within simple short, recurring forms. Only a genius can attain such great variety with such simple means. Many of our famous 'Modernen' might do well to attempt a similar task, instead of trying in mile-long symphonies to conceal their lack of creative power under a garb of dazzling sounds. They would then perhaps be less inclined to use the expressions 'miniature art' or 'drawing room' music when Grieg is under consideration."

It is generally admitted that the two greatest faults of present-day composers are poverty of invention and the use of monster orchestras to depict even the most commonplace things, such as a day in the domestic life of a composer. At the same time the call is becoming more urgent every year for a new composer who will take us back to the golden age when the land was flowing with the milk and honey of melody, and when orchestral colouring was a means to an end and not an end in itself. But why a new man? If musicians will take in hand the Greater Grieg, they will find in

him a Messiah able to lead modern music back to melody and beauty without sacrificing — and that is the marvel of it! — those modern dissonances which have become dear to us.

The fourth reason why Grieg was so often belittled by the professionals — his popularity with the masses — was so keenly dealt with in the London *Truth's* account of his last orchestral concert in that city (May, 1906) that I cannot refrain from quoting it: "The size of the audience was a sight to see, and the warmth of the reception accorded to the hero of the occasion left no room for doubt as to the continued popularity of his music. From this latter point of view the case of Grieg is indeed rather curious. It is at least an arguable proposition that his reputation with the quidnuncs would rest much higher if his music were less generally liked. A striking feature of Grieg's music is, however, despite its originality and even audacity, its uniformly pleasing quality. Although it is so individual there is nothing in it which the humblest music lover cannot understand and enjoy, and this, from the standpoint of a certain type of critics, constitutes a serious defect.

"If Grieg had been artful enough to mingle dulness and obscurity discreetly with his more engaging

qualities, how much higher he would have been rated by some! As it is, the average critic is apt to take the view that it cannot be really fine and original music which moves every schoolgirl to admiration. And certainly it must be admitted that the history of the art goes far to justify this opinion. Yet Grieg would really seem to constitute a striking exception to a well-established rule. As to the originality of his music, there is really no possible room for doubt, and by all the traditions misunderstanding and contumely should have been his portion. Instead he has suffered the indignity of being appreciated by even the least cultivated. No wonder critics of the serious order have viewed him with suspicion. . . . [1]

"Yet if some of our native composers would only bear in mind to an equal extent the require-

[1] On this point Grieg wrote to Röntgen from London, on May 25, 1906: "And *how* one is bothered here with letters of all kinds! Hundreds upon hundreds of such letters still unanswered lie on my table, and I do not see how I can dispose of them. Yes, yes, this popularity is, or better, seems to be, a very fine thing, but it does not come cheap. My standing as an artist suffers thereby, and the criticisms become malicious. More fortunate are those artists who do not win so-called popularity while they are still living. It surely is not my fault that my music is played in third-rate hotels and by schoolgirls. I conceived my music none the less warmly for that reason, without having the public in mind. You ought to be glad that no one can throw mud at you. When your works are played they are played well. That is a great advantage. I do hope the time will come when, forgotten by the world, I shall be able to live for myself and my art."

ments, not necessarily of schoolgirls, but of the public at large, how much more they might accomplish. Instead they aim, too often, at a profundity which is beyond them, and in the result achieve only dulness. Depth is doubtless a desirable quality, but in music, at all events, it is not invariably attained by boring. This, at all events, is not Grieg's way. Not that any one would dream of accusing this most refined and fastidious of masters of playing to the gallery, or of deviating by a hair's breadth from the pursuit of his own ideals. But he has had the courage to be absolutely sincere — to express his own individuality in his own way, and in the result has written music which appeals to one and all. What comes from the heart, it has been truly said, goes to the heart, and so it has been in Grieg's case. There is a tender, haunting beauty, an exquisite fragrance and charm about the best of his work, which are not to be expressed in words."

Writing of the last concert Grieg gave in Berlin, Leopold Schmidt said: "Mingled with the applause there were warmer tones, speaking of deep love and veneration." It is because the Great Public thus not only admires him but loves him that Grieg will live. *Vox populi, vox Dei.* On this point read what Mendelssohn once wrote to Jenny Lind from

Leipsic: "That which is called the Public is exactly the same here as elsewhere and everywhere; the simple 'Public,' assembled together for one instant, so fluctuating, so full of curiosity, so devoid of taste, so dependent upon the judgment of the musician — the so-called connoisseur. But against this we must set the Great Public, assembling together year after year, wiser and more just than connoisseur and musician, and judging so truly! and feeling so delicately."

Complaints are rife in Germany, in France, in England, in America, that concerts do not pay. Why do they not pay? Is it not largely because the players and the singers offer the Great Public what it does not want, neglecting what it wants, for fear of its being "too popular"? When Nikisch played the Peer Gynt suite at a Philharmonic concert in Berlin, one of the critics patted this wonderful music on the back and added superciliously that it was "already played at beer and garden concerts." He might have added that the most popular of all music at "beer and garden concerts" is Wagner's. But the proper place for Wagner's music is in the opera house, and for Grieg's at high-class concerts; there alone can its exquisite beauty and refinement be adequately revealed. Nikisch's audience re-

demanded one of the Grieg pieces, and Hanslick thus summed up the impression made by his music at a Philharmonic concert in Vienna: "The audience had bestowed such lavish applause on Grieg that I feared for the fate of the following number." Weingartner put the "Four Norwegians Dances" on a Berlin programme which included Beethoven's "Eroica" symphony. If conductors did this sort of thing more frequently, some of them would not have to pass the hat around so often among the millionaires.

Of all the foolish things said about the idiosyncrasies of Grieg's music, the foolishest is the assertion that one soon tires of them. Perhaps some persons do; the musical Public, the final arbiter, does not. I am happy to say that I am part and parcel of the public. One of the reasons why I place Grieg in the front rank of composers is that whenever I return to his music it delights me afresh with its personal note. No one who has not been, like myself, a professional critic for nearly thirty years, obliged during six months a year to listen to operas and concerts from two to six and even eight hours a day, can imagine how tired one gets, how one's favourite delicacies are likely to pall on the appetite. As a matter of course, I seldom add to

the surfeit by playing my piano. When I do play, to hear something that will be sure to refresh my jaded senses, it is more often Grieg than anything else. *There* is a test! I have never tired of a Grieg piece or a Grieg song even after a hundred hearings; and oh! I do wish all music-lovers knew them as I know them!

## CHAPTER XIII

### Vocal Compositions

WHEN Hans von Bülow called Grieg the "Chopin of the North," he doubtless had in mind the great refinement of style, the abhorrence of the commonplace, the rare melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic originality, and the "exotic" nationalism which these two masters have in common. Chopin, no doubt, excels Grieg in some points; in others Grieg excels Chopin, notably in his rare faculty for orchestral colouring, and in his gift to the world of one hundred and forty-six songs which only two or three masters have equalled. Chopin's seventeen songs deserve much more attention than they have so far received; but they are a mere episode in his career, whereas Grieg has in his Lieder given us his very life blood. Much as I admire his instrumental works, it is in his lyric songs that I consider him most frequently at his very best. If I devote less space to them than to his instrumental works it is because they share the characteristics of his other compositions, which

have been sufficiently dwelt on in the preceding pages, wherefore little remains but the agreeable task of calling attention to the best by affixing our stars and double stars of commendation.[1]

Before taking the songs in hand, a few longer scores for singers call for notice.

"*At the Cloister Gate.*" — Shortly after returning from Rome, where Liszt had done so much to encourage him, Grieg composed a work which he called "At the Cloister Gate," and dedicated to that far-sighted master. It appeared in print as opus 20, and is a setting of a scene from Björnson's "Arnljot Gelline," for soprano and alto solo, female chorus, and orchestra. The text is a dialogue between a nun and a girl who knocks for admission at the gate of a convent late at night. The girl relates that she is from the Far North; she had a lover, but he slew her own father; she fled, and in passing the cloister she heard women's voices singing the "Hallelujah." "Methought they sang of peace; it soothed my soul. . . . Unlock, unlock, I love him, wretched I, must love him till I die." Then

[1] Once more I beg the reader to remember that the object of this volume is not to comment on all of Grieg's short pieces and songs, but to dwell only on the best of them and do missionary work for these. I am glad I am not like those of my colleagues who apparently find so much more pleasure in gloating over blemishes, real or imaginary, than in calling attention to hidden treasures of genius.

the celestial choir of nuns is heard inviting her to come in from grief and sin to God.

An admirable subject for musical treatment, which inspired Grieg to one of his best works. In all musical literature there are few things so sweetly pathetic, so like a maiden in distress, as the main theme of this composition, which is first sounded when to the question, "Who's knocking so late at the cloister door?" she answers, "Homeless maiden from far away." And this theme, with other sadly beautiful material, is elaborated in a score which is a masterly amalgam of all the arts of the musician.[1]

[1] Yet — and I blush for the profession in writing this — I never had an opportunity of hearing this inspired work with orchestra. In May, 1908, I was glad to accept an invitation from Miss Anna G. Judge, the very capable director of the Glee Club of the Wadleigh High School in New York, to attend a performance of it by her choir of over a hundred girls. They entered into the spirit of the music with delightful zeal. It was a rare treat to hear this music sung by these lovely youthful voices, with the morning dew still on them. One hears nothing so spontaneous, nothing animated by such contagious enthusiasm, from the paid singers in our concert halls and opera houses, and this experience showed me charming vistas of the future of high school music. I was thrilled by Grieg's work, though only a piano was used. What must it be in its rich orchestral garb, including the organ and harp used at the end to colour the solacing chorus of the nuns! I can only wonder, and wish I had been born some decades later, when professional musicians will have discovered Grieg and forgotten most of the ephemeral idols of our day, with their purposeless cacophonies, their war on musical beauty, and their frantic efforts to conceal their lack of new melody in the din made by monster orchestras, and by the choice of sensational "programmes."

*Landsighting.* Much better known than the preceding is Grieg's setting of Björnson's poem, "Landkjending" for male chorus, baritone solo, and orchestra (op. 31). These two choral works might be advantageously included in the same programme; they would reveal Grieg as a master in the realm of the pathetic in the first work, of the heroic in the second. In the "Landsighting" we are on the vessel which takes Olaf Trygvason to the North. The son of a Norwegian king, he had been educated in England, and there became a Christian. In the year 995 he returned to Norway and was elected king after some hard battles. Björnson's poem shows this Norse Columbus and his men eagerly watching for the first signs of land — "the snow peaks o'er cloud banks peeping." At last Norway lies before them, with its green fields, its dark forests, its noisy waterfalls; and Olaf hails the landing-place as the spot to found his kingdom and teach his Faith to his heathen countrymen. Grieg's music is superbly virile. As Closson remarks, here we have *une véritable grandeur, un caractère épique et triomphal.* "One is carried away by an irresistible feeling of enthusiasm, an ardour that is both religious and warlike. The chorus is treated majestically, with large and simple harmonies; it is one

of those works that involuntarily recall the spirit of the heroic popular ballads." The English title given to this work at Leipsic is "Recognition of Land" (Peters edition).

*Album for Male Choir.* When once the Greater Grieg is discovered by professional and amateur musicians, much attention will be paid to his Album for Male Choir and the two numbers from "Sigurd Jorsalfar" (op. 22) for solo, male chorus, and orchestra. The Album contains twelve part songs based on Norwegian folk-melodies. They are unaccompanied, and their intervals and harmonies make some of them difficult to sing, which is one reason why they are seldom heard; but they would amply repay all the work bestowed upon them. Most of them are written for baritone or tenor solo, with choir accompaniment, and the effect is often as entrancing as it is novel. Some of these pieces are humorous, others elegiac or sentimental. The humorous ones are not so difficult, and these may be specially commended to College Glee Clubs, which would find in them a great fund of mirth, both in the verses and the music. Among the funniest are the Nursery Songs: "Boom, boom, boom, boom, Pussy bangs on the big drum"; "The Biggest Fool," "After Dark," "Young Edmund," "Hall-

ing" (No. 8), "Good for Nothing," "There Goes Bob." [1]

The Greater Grieg is exemplified admirably in his opus 32, a baritone solo (with string orchestra and two horns) named, in the Peters edition, "*Der Einsame*" ("Alone"), but called by Grieg himself "*Der Bergentrückte*" ("Astray on the Mountain-side"). The singer relates how he lost his way in the woods, was beguiled by elfin maids, danced with the fairest of them, yet, alone of all living beings in forest and stream, he could not experience the joys of love. And the refrain is: "Elfin maids beguiled my way, never more shall I reach home." A romantic subject, somewhat similar to Schumann's "Loreley in the Woods" ("Waldesgespräch"), but with a bleak northern tinge. Niemann sees in this song a mood-picture representing the Norwegian people sighing in the wintry fjords and mountain valleys for the light and warmth of the summer sun. Grieg wrote it in winter, among the mountains of the Sörfjord, in his best creative period, and it echoes personal experiences. The reader may remember the passage in one of his letters printed in the Introduction, in which he expresses his

[1] All these can be had for a trifle in the Peters edition. Interesting comments on them may be found in Schjelderup and Niemann's Life of Grieg, pp. 154–156.

surprise that I had made no mention (in the proof-sheets of the first edition of this book) of this song, which, he wrote, "contains drops of my heart's blood." It was indeed an unpardonable (though accidental) oversight; for in this song Grieg's genius is at a white heat of inspiration. Read it over once, and it will haunt you forever. It haunted, in particular, Edward MacDowell, whose works repeatedly show traces of its influence.

"*Olaf Trygvason.*" When Björnson heard his "At the Cloister Gate" with Grieg's music he was "beside himself with ecstasy," and promptly expressed a strong desire to write an opera libretto for him. He started in 1873 and soon had ready the first act of a work entitled "Olaf Trygvason," which was at once set to music. Then he switched off to a modern comedy. After he had finished that, he invited Grieg to make a trip with him to Italy, there to complete the opera. But Grieg was in no mood for this. An estrangement came between the two men — headstrong both — and it was not till 1892 that they met again as friends, at a performance in Christiania of the choruses of their operatic fragment. Grieg now was ready to continue the work, but Björnson had lost the connecting thread, and thus the composition remained

a fragment, the parts of which the composer subsequently arranged for the concert hall.

It was probably fortunate that the eminent Norwegian poet failed to complete his opera book. When he wrote the "Landsighting" and "At the Cloister Gate" he unintentionally provided admirably for a musical setting — the latter contains the germs for an excellent operatic plot — but his deliberately undertaken libretto was not sufficiently operatic; it contains splendid poetic passages, but it is clumsily constructed, there is too much repetition, and too great prominence is given to the chorus. This is to be regretted, for the subject in itself provided splendid opportunities. Olaf Trygvason is the most interesting hero in old Norwegian history. Carlyle referred to him as "still a shining figure to us, the wildly beautifulest man in body and soul that one has ever heard of in the North." He conquered more by his personality than by his sword. It was at Trondhjem that his career of conquest and conversion to Christianity first met with serious opposition, and the beginning of this conflict is portrayed in this operatic fragment.

The scene is placed in an ancient Norse temple. The Vikings are celebrating their heathen rites and offering their immolations; there are invocations to

the gods and imprecations on the enemy, varied by a weird dance in which the women are swung over the temple fires. In the music which Grieg wrote for these wild scenes there is less than his usual spontaneity of invention, but there is much interesting evidence of a genuine gift for operatic composition. Even as played on the pianoforte, it impresses one with its strong dramatic touches; and the orchestra must emphasise these greatly. The introduction, for instance, to cite Schjelderup, "is in its simplicity full of spirit. The threatening bass, the horns, persisting on the same tone, the dark rolling of the kettledrums, and the tremolo of the strings, give us a good picture of the wild gloom of heathendom."

In the address which he delivered on the occasion of Grieg's sixtieth birthday, Björnson intimated that only one more step was needed for Norway to reach the greatest of the musical forms — the opera. It was partly his fault that that step was not taken. Grieg had long been desirous of writing a grand opera, but he could find no suitable libretto. That he might, if favoured with a good one have written one as popular as "Carmen" or "Faust" is indicated by the extraordinary favour which his semi-operatic "Peer Gynt" music continues to enjoy,

as well as by the dramatic intensity of some of his songs and fragments of his choral and stage works. Ibsen once spoke to Grieg of an opera libretto called "Olaf Liliekrands," which he had partly written: "It was originally intended for another musician, but I would sooner give it to you than to any one else. In a year's time it shall be finished and placed at your disposal." But Grieg never received it.[1] How could he write an opera if the poets thus left him in the lurch? To be sure, his life-long invalidism made it practically impossible for him, as before intimated, to undertake and carry out so arduous a task as an operatic score. To cite his own comment, made in a private communication to the author: "Leider hat meine Gesundheit grössere Arbeiten, wonach ich mich gesehnt habe, unmöglich gemacht."

The music which Grieg wrote for the first act of "Olaf Trygvason" is strongly influenced by the early Wagner operas. Closson characterises it as "continuellement farouche, sombre, même dans les explosions de joie et de triomphe." But Wagner

[1] Many years later, on the occasion of Grieg's silver wedding, he received a visit from Ibsen who, as the composer wrote to Dr. Abraham, "was very eager to make an opera-text for me, namely, 'A Norse Campaign,' a subject which he has used for a play, and which certainly is excellently suited for a musical setting. Were I only well! But even in that case I can hear you exclaim: 'For heaven's sake!'"

had so habituated modern audiences to sombre moods that this in itself would not have been an impediment to success. Philip Hale was impressed by the "wild, unearthly" quality of the music, and by its element of ancient mystery, which recalled to him the lines of Walt Whitman:

> "I see the burial cairns of Scandinavian warriors;
> I see them raised high with stones, by the marge of restless oceans, that the dead men's spirits, when they wearied of their quiet graves, might rise up through the mounds and gaze on the tossing billows, and be refreshed by storms, immensity, liberty, action."

At the Cincinnati May Festival, 1908, Mr. Van der Stucken closed the series of concerts with "Olaf Trygvason," which was "given with an effect that was colossal and that brought the festival to a tremendous climax," as one of the critics remarked.

On October 8 of the same year this operatic fragment had its first scenic production, at the National Theatre in Christiania. "It made a powerful impression," wrote the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. "The opera plays in the time of 'Olaf Trygvason,' when Christianity was first brought to heathen Norway. It brings in its first scenes (which alone have been worked out) a war-spirited immolation to the gods. The message

of the prophetess Voelo, the dance of the maidens, followed by the jump over the sacred fire and the prayer of the warriors, are probably the most *Germanic* things ever set to music. There is in them a mighty fervour and power. This performance means the discovery of a treasure which will assuredly be valued in other countries as well as in Norway. Deeper still will the impression be if the vocal parts are adequately rendered, which was not the case here. On the other hand, the orchestra, under Conductor Halvorsen, accomplished its task brilliantly."

*Four Psalms.* The last of Grieg's compositions (opus 74) were four psalms based on old Norwegian church melodies. They are for baritone or bass solo with mixed choir, unaccompanied, and are his only contributions to ecclesiastic music. They show that despite his persistent and increasing ill-health, he preserved the creative power to the last. While he borrowed the melodies of these songs, he elaborated them in his own way and the harmonies are superbly original, bold, and characteristically Griegian. At the same time they emphasise the national and mediæval aspects of these church melodies. When these Psalms were first sung at Copenhagen one of the critics declared that Grieg

was one of the greatest if not the greatest of all harmonists.[1]

At one time Grieg planned an oratorio, to be entitled "Peace." The text was by Björnson; but the composer never wrote more than one number, "Jeg Elsket" (I loved Him), which appeared as one of the posthumous songs that will be referred to presently. In a letter to the poet Benzon Grieg explained that he lost his interest in this work because Björnson wished to have his text printed before the music was completed. In this letter Grieg wrote: "I am such a sensitive plant that the fragrance vanished for that reason, though he had written the poem at my request."

*Songs.* — "His lovely and too little known songs are unique in their delicate voicing of the tenderest, most elusive personal feeling, as well as in their consummate *finesse* of workmanship," writes one of the least sympathetic critics of Grieg. These songs, says the same writer (Daniel Gregory Mason) "are often as spontaneous as Schubert's, as impassioned as Schumann's, and as finished in art as Robert Franz's. And they are admirably adapted to the voice."

[1] See Grieg's interesting remarks on these old Catholic and mediæval melodies and the dissonances he added to them, in a letter to Röntgen dated August 15, 1906.

Here, indeed, we are on ground where a difference of opinion is simply inconceivable among those who really know these Lieder, which surprisingly few do. With a few exceptions, the professional singers have heretofore neglected them, partly because of an exaggerated fear of their unusual melodic intervals, which a few days of study would enable them to master. When, after regaling myself with Grieg's songs, I attend some of the public recitals and note the commonplace programmes in vogue, I feel like one who sees people walking in a brook-bed gathering pebbles, blind to the diamonds and rubies they might pick up in their place.

As the four numbers of opus 1 are least in merit among Grieg's pianoforte pieces, so his opus 2, containing four Songs for Alto, is the least interesting of his groups of Lieder. Yet Prof. Hugo Riemann, in his "History of Music since Beethoven," declares that "some of Grieg's first works (*i.e.*, the songs opus 2) speak a mighty tone-language which suggests Schubert in his greatest moments." This is altogether too high praise. I myself believe that Grieg in some of his songs equals Schubert at his best; indeed, I think he should and will be ranked ultimately as second to Schubert only; but it is in his later works that he rises to such heights,

not in the earliest ones, in which he was still a little afraid to rely on his own wings. Grieg has written songs as superior to those of opus 2 as Wagner's "Tristan" is superior to his "Rienzi." [1]

The number of Grieg's *Lieder* published during his lifetime is one hundred and thirty-five, and to these must be added eleven printed after his death. About one-half of the total number are master-songs. Of what other song-writer can as much be said? And while there are more of the master-songs in the early and middle periods than in the last two decades, there are nevertheless a number of songs in this last period which show that his genius kept its edge to the end.[2]

[1] Riemann's criticism was destined to provide an amusing illustration of that parroting propensity among musical critics which accounts for the stubborn survival of so many foolish notions regarding Grieg. In the Scandinavian number of "Die Musik" R. M. Breithaupt remarks that "Noch in op. 2 sind Züge die Schubert's künstlerisch höchstem Schaffen nahe kommen." ("In opus 2 there are still traits that approach Schubert's highest creative moments.") And after Grieg's death Dr. Hermann Gehrmann wrote in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*: "Denn dass er zum Höchsten hätte berufen sein können, dafür legt eines seiner ersten Werke, die Lieder op. 2, die an Schubert's Bestes gemahnen, vollgültiges Zeugniss ab." (For that he might have been one of the greatest is absolutely proved by one of his earliest works, the songs, opus 2 which suggest Schubert at his best.) Evidently none of these writers gave himself the trouble (and pleasure) of looking over the later and unspeakably greater songs of Grieg.

[2] The reader may easily convince himself that this is so by looking over the "Fifty Grieg Songs" published by the Oliver Ditson Co. (Boston). In this collection I included what seemed to me the best fifty of his songs; and that my choice would have met with his approval is

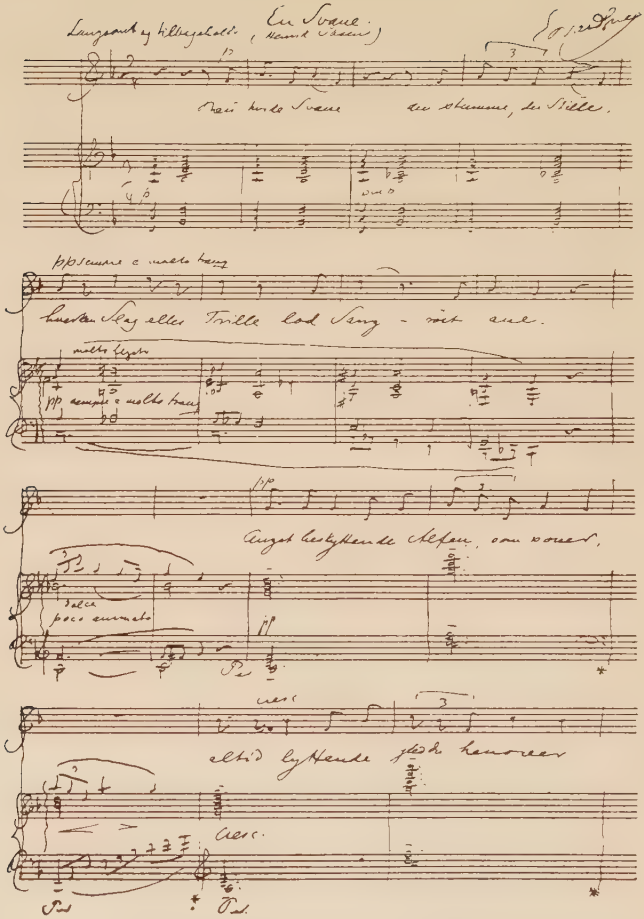
Sixty of the songs, including many of the best, are in the five Grieg Albums published in Leipsic in the Peters edition. They are not arranged in chronological order. The first Album includes the romantic and well-known "The Princess" (how grandly in this the music sinks with the setting sun!), two cradle songs, of which the second (No. 7) is one of the most ineffably sad works in existence (the baby's mother is dead); and "The Odalisque," a most effective concert piece.

The second Album contains the most popular of Grieg's songs (at present): "I Love Thee," which might have been written by Schumann in one of his best moments. The other numbers in Album II. are all one-star songs. In the third Album all the songs are marked (in my copy) with a star, and five of them have two stars. Two of these, "Solvejg's Lied" and "The Swan," vie in popularity with "I Love Thee." Regarding "The Swan" [1] (of which the poetic meaning may not be clear to him

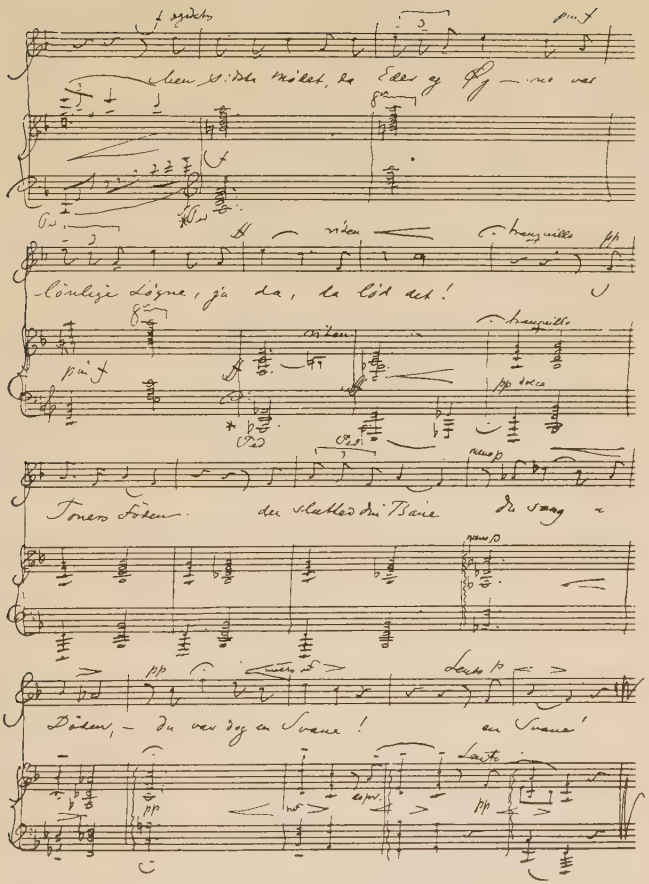
obvious from what he wrote regarding my "Songs and Song Writers," already cited in the Preface: "You have in the main dwelt on the very songs which I myself consider the best." To the introduction to the Ditson volume I must also refer those who wish for more details regarding the best fifty songs than there is room for in the present volume. See also pp. 204–214 of my "Songs and Song Writers" for further remarks on the songs themselves, the poets who wrote the verses, the translations, and Wagner's influence on Grieg.

[1] See the facsimile of Grieg's manuscript.

who reads and runs) the composer emphasises the fact that the words "At Last thou Sangest" must be sung *sempre ff*, if possible even with a *crescendo*, and by no means *diminuendo* and *piano*. There is a superb climax in these two bars, when the swan, silent all its life, sings at last. "The Minstrel's Song" embodies the favourite Norse legend of the river sprite teaching the magic love-compelling art of song in return for the singer's salvation. Grieg's music starts with a tune in the true "Legendenton," and develops into a miniature music drama. "A Lovely Evening in Summer 'twas" presents a bright contrast to that minstrel lover (who loses his beloved as well as his soul); its fifteen bars are a vial containing some of that concentrated quintessence of melody and love of home, for the distillation of which Grieg has the best recipe. And what shall I say of the "First Primrose"? Songs of flowers and love and spring there are innumerable, but none more fresh, more spontaneous, dewy, fragrant, heartfelt, than this. Why it is so seldom sung in public passes comprehension. It seems destined to become the most popular of Grieg's songs.

Album IV. is a treasure which every singer should possess. It contains a dozen songs, all but two

FACSIMILE OF GRIEG'S SONG "A SWAN"

*By permission of the publishers, C. F. Peters, Leipzig.*



FACSIMILE OF GRIEG'S SONG "A SWAN"

*By permission of the publishers, C. F. Peters, Leipzig.*

or three of which deserve the double-star of highest praise. Surely that man hath no music in his soul who can familiarise himself with these twelve songs without wanting to hasten to the nearest music-seller's to buy everything for the voice Grieg ever wrote. The last of the dozen, "My Goal," contains a slight suggestion of Schubert's "Erlking." In the rest it would be difficult to find a bar that is not unadulterated Grieg — a new wonderland for those who have never opened these inspired pages. Concerning the poems in this collection, Grieg gave me this information in 1890: "In the Album vol. IV. we breathe the air of my native country. In these songs, which differ from all the preceding ones, I struck a tone of Norwegian *Volksthümlichkeit* which was new at the time. I was all aflame with enthusiasm when I became acquainted, in the spring of 1880, with the poems of Vinje, which embody a deep philosophy of life, and in course of eight to ten days I composed not only the songs contained in the fourth volume, but others by the same poet which are not yet in print. A. O. Vinje was a peasant by birth. He attempted with his prose works to enlighten the Norwegian people; and these writings, together with his poems, gave him a great national importance."

These twelve songs represent the high-water mark of Grieg's genius. Their emotional range is wide. Two of them, "A Fair Vision" and "The First Thing," are love songs; a third, "The Old Mother," a charmingly melodious musical apotheosis of filial affection. "Faith" is a solemn religious choral. A contagious patriotic feeling predominates in "The Berry," "My Goal," and "On the Way Home," the last of which is of indescribable beauty, especially in its final four bars, in which the composer, overwhelmed by the memories of his youth, indulges in a fervent and glorious outburst of feeling for which few parallels exist in the whole range of music. In most of these songs there is a touch of melancholy, which is greatly emphasised in the remaining ones, reaching a climax in "False Friendship," which is a counterpart to Schubert's "Doppelgänger," with the weirdest of harmonies — a song in which heartrending agony is miraculously coupled with simplicity of structure. "The Riverside" is one of the best songs to study the quaint melodic intervals and harmonies which constitute the physiognomy of Grieg, and which familiarity makes more and more fascinating. "Springtide" and "The Wounded Heart" are the two gems which the composer has given an or-

chestral setting ("Two Elegiac Melodies for String Orchestra").

Volume V. of the Albums begins with "From Monte Pincio," which is, from some points of view, the greatest of Grieg's songs; musical word-painting there is here rivalling Liszt's "Loreley." Of course it is music of the future; the next generation will know and sing and love it. This Album also includes Solvejg's despairing "Cradle Song" (to which reference was made in Chapter X.), and the heartrending "At the Bier of a Young Woman," in which there are nine bars (the twelfth to the twentieth) that are like a vision of heaven. Few indeed are the song collections in which the music-lover can come across a nugget of unalloyed genius like this.

Apart from the five Albums there are twelve separate collections of songs: op. 2, 10, 44, 48, 49, 58, 59, 60, 61 (seven Kinderlieder), 67, 69, 70. Conspicuous for individuality and charm among these is op. 44, "Aus Fjeld und Fjord" (see "Songs and Song Writers," p. 211). The Prologue is a fine specimen of recitative, while "Ragnhild" and "Ragna" are as tuneful and almost as simple as folk-songs, yet altogether Griegian. These also will be favourites in the concert halls of the future.

Of the six numbers in op. 48 four are decorated with double stars: Nos. 1, 2, 3, 6. "Im Kahne," one of Lilli Lehmann's favourites, is included in op. 60. It is followed by one of the weirdest of Grieg's songs, "A Bird cried o'er the Lonely Sea," concerning which the composer informs me that the introductory bars embody a melodic-rhythmic motive which he heard from a gull in the Sognefjord. Another of Lilli Lehmann's concert numbers is the "Zickeltanz" (Kid-Dance) of op. 67. The gem of this late collection, however, is No. 2. "The Mountain Maid," which surely must appeal to every music-lover, amateur or professional.[1] It is a two-star song, so is the dirge, "At Mother's Grave," in op. 69, with thrilling, heart-rending harmonies,

[1] In 1898 Grieg sent his friend, Oscar Meyer, proof-sheets of his new songs (op. 67), soon to be published under the title of "The Mountain Maid," concerning which he gave this interesting information: "Kindly inform X [the English translator] that the subject concerns a peasant girl, and that the original therefore presents a national or folklore style. What a pity that you cannot read in the original Garborg's lovely pastoral, 'Hugtessa,' from which these poems have been taken! It is a masterpiece, full of simplicity and depth, and indescribably beautiful in colour. That these songs (opus 67) are essentially different from any of my former ones cannot escape your fine perception of such things." To Röntgen he wrote regarding "Hugtessa": "It is a truly inspired book in which the music is really already composed. All you have to do is to write it down." Schjelderup notes (p. 66) that these songs were written shortly after a very successful music festival at Bergen which made Grieg "ten years younger," to cite his own words. "His joy had a stimulating effect on his creative powers." Certainly none of his songs is more superbly original than "The Mountain Maid."

which clamour for orchestration; and another is "O Beware" in op. 70, with the most fascinatingly quaint melody and sombre harmonies. The eighteen songs included in op. 67, 69, and 70 are twentieth-century compositions by a man born in 1843; yet they have all the freshness and spontaneity of youth.

Until within a few weeks of his death, Grieg's "mental powers were keen, and he was always full of his work and his plans for the future," as his Australian friend, Percy Grainger, wrote. He wanted to make further studies of folk-music, with the aid of a phonograph, and he had a number of unfinished songs and other pieces which he hoped to complete. On July 19, 1907, he wrote from Troldhaugen to his Copenhagen publisher, Wilhelm Hansen:

"To-day is a day of prayer and supplication. Tell Fröken Jakobsen of the Hotel Bristol, or ask S—— to tell her, that among the things kept for us in the loft which S—— was so kind as to pack and send to Bergen, there were, on arrival, several things missing: (1) A large geographical work on Finland; (2) the collected songs of your correspondent, in two handsomely bound volumes; and the worst of it is that in these books there had been placed

several manuscript songs which I can no longer remember by heart; probably several other things are missing, which so far have escaped our notice. *All the other things may go, if I can only get the songs back.* Never again will I leave anything in a hotel, except under lock and key. I have a presentiment that all inquiry will be in vain, but I think it is my duty to do everything possible for the sake of the MSS."

The words I have italicized show that Grieg had these manuscripts much at heart and that the supposed loss of them was a great shock; and well it might be, for two of them — "I Loved Him" and "The Hunter" — are among his best compositions. Of the other nine printed in the Peters edition the best are "The Fair Haired Maiden" and "Sighs," with quaint harmonic progressions and a melody as simple as a folk-song. The earliest of these eleven songs is dated 1865; the latest 1905 — this being "The Hunter" which is of peculiar interest. The text is German and there is a faint suggestion of Jensen; in its harmonies, however, it is a Grieg of the ripest period, a song that thrills its interpreters and that will be found effective in the concert hall. More beautiful still is "I Loved Him," a plaintive song in minor mode which haunts the memory after

a first hearing and makes one long to hear it over and over again. It was composed in 1885, for a projected oratorio, and is a two-star song. The remaining seven of these posthumous songs are, like so many of Schubert's and Schumann's, interesting in spots only. The eminent Danish critic, Dr. Angul Hammerik, declares that almost all of the eleven "mean a real qualitative addition to the great body of Grieg's songs," and that they are "historical documents showing Grieg carrying the marshal's staff in his knapsack when he was still a very young man."

There is an astonishing variety of moods in these one hundred and forty-six [1] songs of Grieg. From the "Cradle Song" to "At Mother's Grave" there is hardly a feeling that stirs the human heart which is not embodied here in verse and tones. To mention all these feelings would be to give a complete list of the songs. Has the joy of life ever been expressed more exuberantly than in "The First Primrose"? the passion of love more deeply than in "I Love Thee"? the feeling for home more ardently than in

[1] Or 147. Mr. Arthur Laser writes to me: "Monastier remarks that there exists another song by Grieg without opus number: 'Verborgene Liebe,' to verses used by another composer. Words in *The Girl's own Paper*. It is in A minor. He can't find the date. The song is very beautiful, but not dramatic. It was written about 1886–88." I have not been able to find a copy of this song.

"On the Journey Home"? disappointment more bitterly than in the false "Friendship"? Where will you find a song conjuring up memories of the past and scenes of the present like "From Monte Pincio"? Where will you find a deeper note of grief than in the "Cradlesong" in which the father sings a dirge over the mother who has died in giving life to her boy? or in "At a Young Woman's Bier"? or in "At Mother's Grave," written only a few years before Grieg's own death? I once wrote to him suggesting that he should make an orchestral funeral march of this heartrending dirge, but tore up the letter for fear that, at his age and with his very poor health, he might see something ominous in such a suggestion.

## CHAPTER XIV

### Grieg's Artistic Creed — Patriotism and Religion

EDVARD GRIEG made his life, like his music, melodious and beautiful. He was modest and sincere, enthusiastically devoted to his art, an ideal patriot and husband, a friend to young musicians, an ardent admirer of the old masters of all nationalities, a missionary for all that is true and good in art. Unlike some other composers of the first rank, he had a warm sympathy for his younger contemporaries, notably Sinding, Lange-Müller, and Sjögren. To Sinding's songs he attached much importance. "He has been accused," he wrote to me, "of being too Wagnerian, but that, in my opinion, is a shallow judgment. In his songs, in particular, he is all Sinding. Especially inspired are his settings of Drachmann's poems. Lange-Müller and Sjögren are also extremely poetic and refined song-writers, the first-named suggesting his Danish origin while the other is more cosmopolitan."

On various occasions Grieg helped composers and artists to success in Christiania or Copenhagen by sending to the local newspapers an appreciative notice before their appearance. No less cordial was an article he wrote for the *Musikbladet* of Copenhagen of May 14, 1885, about the eminent Danish composer J. P. E. Hartmann, in which he plainly intimates that that Nestor of Scandinavian composers was the first to claim the new land on which others, including himself, subsequently settled and tilled the soil. Grieg's words are as follows:

"What Northern artist who has the real appreciation of the spirit of the North does not remember to-day what he owes to Hartmann? The best, deepest thoughts which a whole posterity of more or less noteworthy minds have lived on he was the first to express . . . Let us to-day remember that the rich formal unfolding of Danish art through his successors would never have occurred had he not been. . . . We must take special notice of his melodramatic treatment of Öhlenschläger's 'Guldhornene' because here he sounds for the first time the Norse tone which for him and his successors in Denmark has become such a rich gold mine."

Grieg's ability to thoroughly appreciate music

entirely different from his own is vividly shown in the essay he wrote on Verdi, shortly after the death of Italy's greatest composer.[1] "I regret," he writes, "that I did not know Verdi personally. I once called upon him in Paris, but without meeting him, and received in return his visiting card at my hotel. I have kept it, and the envelope, on which he had written my — unfortunately not his — name, as a relic."

With Verdi, in Grieg's opinion, was gone "the last of the great ones, and if it were permissible to compare artistic greatness, I would say that Verdi was greater than either Bellini, Rossini, or Donizetti. I would go so far, even, as to say that side by side with Wagner he was, on the whole, the greatest dramatist of the century."

"What he was to his country we can best estimate when we read that after his death the municipal authorities of Milan met in the middle of the night to discuss in what manner honour should be shown to the deceased; and that in Rome, where all the schools gave their scholars holidays until the funeral had taken place, a sitting of the Senate was entirely devoted to the memory of Verdi."

[1] This article is dated Copenhagen, February, 1901. An English version by Ethel Hearn appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* and *Littell's Living Age*, 1901, pp. 11–14.

A hero at home, he was for a long time underrated elsewhere. "At the Leipsic Conservatory, in the fifties and sixties, a mention of Verdi's music met with nothing but a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders or the smile of superiority." Gradually the national element in his art was more fully appreciated and Verdi himself grew bigger. Concerning his masterwork, "Aïda," Grieg exclaims:

"What a marvellous development! What significant years in Verdi's inner life does it not betoken! If any one should ask me what school this work belongs to, I could not answer him. It stands upon the shoulders of the art of all time. The newer masters of both France and Germany gave him impulses, but nothing more; 'Aïda' is a masterpiece in which his own originality is combined with a wide and sympathethic view of what is best in musical contemporaneity. Verdi the Italian and Verdi the European hold out a hand to one another; the language he here speaks is the language of the world, and we need not go to the country of the composer to understand it. For this reason 'Aïda' was a success all along the line. His melodies, his harmonies, his treatment of orchestra and choruses, each and all claim the same admiration — and one thing more: the Egyptian local colour.

This is not the outcome of a refined technique, but is achieved in great measure by the power his imagination had of transporting itself to the place where the scene of his work is laid. As one example among many, I will merely mention the night scene on the Nile, at the beginning of the third act, in which the flageolet tones of the violoncellos and double-basses, the pizzicato of the violas, and the combined tremolo and arpeggios of the violins accompany an extremely strange flute melody. You are carried away to the solitude of an African night — hear the mysterious and indeterminate sounds peculiar to it. Imagination and technique in conjunction have succeeded in producing an effect which is entrancing from its marvellous fulness of character."

Grieg also admired the astounding "capacity for still further development, the depth, the versatility" which the ageing master displayed in his "Otello":

"Among the many remarkable things in the instrumentation of this opera is the use made, among other things, of the entire collective orchestral apparatus for the production of a pianissimo, and a fear-inspiring pianissimo it is. This effect is, I think, new, at any rate I do not remember to have met with it in the works of any other master.

"It would seem as if 'Aïda' and 'Otello' vied with each other for the first place in Verdi's production. I mentioned the Egyptian colour in 'Aïda.' I used at one time often to go to the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, where 'Otello' was admirably rendered and where the orchestra was conducted by Johan Svendsen, and enjoyed the glorious work to the utmost. When, however, the first notes of the overture to the last act were played, I always became aware of a pair of questioning musician's eyes, from the orchestra or the surrounding audience, fixed upon me. On mentioning the matter and asking if any explanation could be given of it, I was told that it was thought that Verdi showed here an intimate acquaintance with the newer Norwegian music. How far this is true I cannot tell, but that Verdi did know the Norwegian folk-songs I am prepared, after this overture, to say was a certainty. It is a bit of touching, melancholy music, in which the master, in an admirable manner, lets the wood-wind instruments depict Desdemona's presentiments of death." [1]

[1] These first bars of the last act, writes Joakim Reinhard, show "unmistakable traces of Norwegian — or, rather, of Griegian influence. For although Grieg modestly surmises that the peculiar strain may be due to Verdi's knowledge of some 'Norwegian' music other than his own, the true Grieg colour is, to my mind, obviously present."

In "Falstaff" Verdi's "fancy does not take flight as formerly," but it "contains a true mine of artistic detail."

Beside the paper on Verdi there are two essays of his which have appeared in a magazine — "Schumann" in the *Century* (January, 1894), and "Mozart" in the same periodical for November, 1897. While Schumann's name is at present known and loved throughout the civilised world, "it is not to be denied," writes Grieg, "that the best years of his artistic activity were lost without any comprehension of his significance, and when recognition at last began to come, Schumann's strength was broken. Of this melancholy fact I received a vivid impression when, in the year 1883, I called upon his famous wife, Clara Schumann, in Frankfort-on-the-Main. I fancied she would be pleased to hear of her husband's popularity in so distant a region as my native country, Norway; but in this I was mistaken. Her countenance darkened as she answered: 'Yes, *now!*'"

With great acumen Grieg puts his finger on Schumann's chief artistic misdemeanour — an offence against his own genius: "it would have been better for Schumann if he had listened less to Mendelssohn's maxims and set more store by his own."

With equal acumen he sets forth the greatness of Schumann's art, and then proceeds to defend him against the attacks of the *Bayreuther Blätter* (1879), which, though signed by Joseph Rubinstein, were, he was convinced, inspired, and more than inspired, by Wagner himself. Some of the charges made in this article were that Schumann's symphonic works are "only orchestrated piano-music" — a succession of "shoemaker's patches." [1]

[1] As the opinion that Wagner was the real author of that article was widely prevalent at the time, I wrote to Anton Seidl asking what he believed to be the truth. He replied:

"If Wagner had not considered it beneath his dignity to answer the disgusting accusations or insinuations made at that time he would have done so. I happened to be at Bayreuth, in Wagner's house, shortly before Joseph Rubinstein's article appeared in the *Bayreuther Blätter*. I remember many occasions when Wagner spoke in a most admiring manner of Schumann's 'Manfred,' nay even of his opera 'Genoveva'; he pronounced 'Manfred' the inspiration of a really creative mind, adding, however, that, as in the case of Mendelssohn's 'Midsummer Night's Dream Music,' it was not equalled by his later works. It is well known that in this opinion he did not stand alone. On the other hand, it is self-evident that Wagner, the energetic hero who strengthened his muscles amid the steel rhythms of Beethoven's symphonies, could not sympathize with the dreamy character of Schumann's symphonies. . . . Let me add that very often Wagner did not see the articles accepted by the editor, Hans von Wolzogen, for the *Bayreuther Blätter* until after their appearance in print. In the case of the Schumann article, too, the initiative did not come from him at all. The pianist, Joseph Rubinstein (no relation of the two great Rubinsteins), who was pursuing his studies at Bayreuth, occasionally caught up certain expressions used by Wagner in conversation; these expressions, which he was unable to digest, he worked up into an undigested article, which Wagner subsequently found equally indigestible when he got sight of it. Bismarck once exclaimed, 'The German fears no one except God.' Was

In the course of his remarks on Schumann Grieg pays his compliments to "that army of inflated arrogance which wrongfully have adopted the title of 'Wagnerians' and Lisztians'"; expressly discriminating, however, "between the true and genuine admirers of these two mighty masters and the howling horde which calls itself '——ians.'" Naturally, this brought down on the bold Norwegian's head the howls of the horde referred to. Indeed, one of the main reasons why German critics laboured so industriously to belittle Grieg was because the impression prevailed that he refused to pay tribute to Wagner.

In the "Mozart" article there is an echo of this disturbance, but most of it is devoted to a loving analysis of the great German's genius, which every admirer of Grieg should read. Mozart, too, like Schumann, "was not esteemed at his true value while he lived," and in his case, too, efforts at belittlement have been made in our day. Grieg confesses that he himself "loved Mozart, then for a time lost him, but found him again, nevermore to lose him."

An editorial note that was prefixed to the article

not Wagner a man whose whole life exemplified this truth? If he had entertained opinions on Schumann such as are expressed in that article, he certainly would have expressed them over his own name and not have taken refuge behind the back of a dyspeptic musician."

on Mozart included the statement that "in artistic convictions and principles, and most powerfully in patriotic instinct, Grieg has necessarily found himself opposed to the Wagnerian propaganda." This gave Grieg a welcome opportunity to explain his real attitude, which he did in a letter to the New York *Times*, in which he said: "My artistic convictions and principles are not in any way 'opposed to the Wagnerian propaganda.' I have pointed out the mistaken tactics of the Wagnerians with regard to Schumann and Mozart, but I myself make propaganda for Wagner wherever I can, without being an adherent of the so-called Wagnerism. I am, in fact, no believer in any kind of 'isms.' I am neither more nor less than an admirer of Wagner — so ardent an admirer, indeed, that there can scarcely be a greater." When he first had an opportunity in his youth to hear "Tannhäuser," he attended fourteen performances in succession. While there are no echoes of Wagner's *ideas* in his music, he frankly admitted in a private letter that in the songs of his second period, and still more in those of the third, he endeavoured to learn from Wagner how to perfect his declamation.[1]

[1] Reference was made in Chapter VI to the fact that Grieg was one of the pilgrims to Bayreuth in 1876. He wrote a series of articles on

His ardent devotion to Wagner did not prevent him from enjoying the antipodal Brahms. He reproved me gently, in a letter printed in the Introduction, for not sharing his enthusiasm. In a letter to Röntgen he alludes to an individual who found Brahms dry, and dubs him an "idiot." Röntgen's Reminiscences contain many interesting details relating to the friendship between those two men, who, widely as their ideals differed, greatly esteemed one another. Brahms was hugely delighted over the ovations Grieg received in Vienna in 1896. A banquet was given to Grieg at which he delivered a eulogy on Brahms. "Brahms was of course present, and Grieg make a speech about him, so warm and beautiful that we were all deeply moved. Not a word about his own triumphs, with which we all were still impressed. Brahms listened with his head bent low, and when Grieg had finished he went up to him and, deeply moved, pressed his hand silently." Some letters were also exchanged by the two masters.

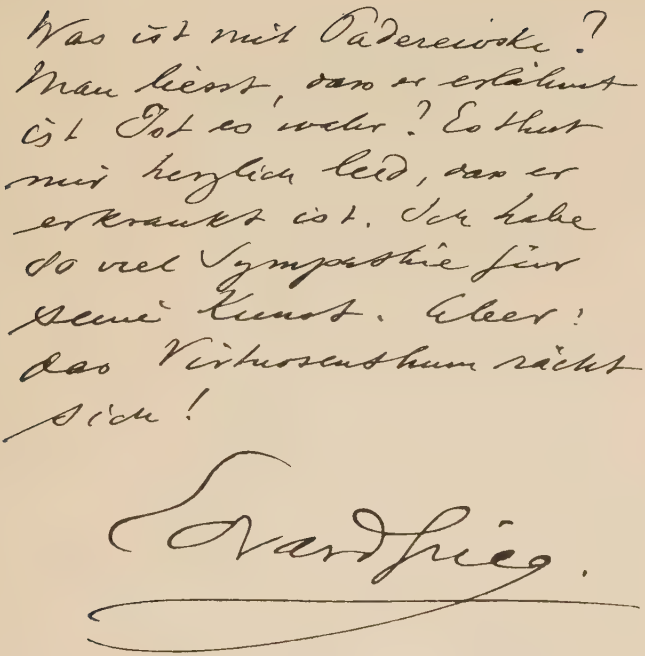
His appreciation of the gifts of Arthur Sullivan

the Nibelung Festival for the *Bergensposten* newspaper, in which he was, as he says, "at the same time wildly enthusiastic and severely critical." "Without being a Wagnerite, I was at that time what I am now: an adherent, nay, a worshipper of the mighty genius." Neither these articles nor other newspaper criticisms written by him have so far been reprinted.

and several other English musicians was referred to in the first chapter. Never was a man's ability to enjoy what is good in the music of all countries less hampered than in his case. For the works of the Russian Tchaikovsky and the Bohemian Dvořák he felt an admiration which they reciprocated; when Dvořák died, Grieg sent a beautiful letter of condolence to the stricken family. To the American MacDowell and his wife he wrote letters of sympathetic appreciation. His feeling towards Paderewski and his art is expressed in an extract from a letter to the author of this volume (see the facsimile) written shortly after the railway collision which came near ending the Polish pianist-composer's career; in English: "What has happened to Paderewski? The papers say he is paralysed. Is it true? I am heartily sorry that he is ill. I feel so much sympathy for his art. But — virtuosity revenges itself!" [1]

Of the masters of the past, Paderewski's countryman, Chopin, probably had Grieg's warmest love throughout his life. It began in childhood, and in his Conservatory days, in particular, he was profoundly impressed "by the intense minor mood

[1] He did not know that Paderewski's condition was due to the railway accident referred to.




Facsimile of a Note About Paderewski

of the Slavic folk-music in Chopin's harmonies, and the sadness over the unhappy fate of his native land in his melodies." Concerning Bach's works he wrote in his essay on Mozart: "Excepting Bach, who here, as everywhere, is the fundamental pillar on which all modern music rests, no one has understood so well as Mozart how to use the chromatic scale to express the highest effect in music. We must go as far as Wagner before we find chromatic harmonies used for the expression of ardent feeling (*Innigkeit*)."

Among modern works which moved him was César Franck's "Les Béatitudes." Strauss's "Death and Transfiguration" he liked so much when he first heard it that he telegraphed to the composer to express his admiration. The later works of Strauss he did not like; nor did Max Reger's music impress him favourably. Among modern interpreters he admired particularly Nikisch and Paderewski, his only stricture being that they shared the general modern addiction to an excessive tempo rubato. He liked Messchaert very much: "On listening to his interpretation of my songs I have had the same voluptuous sensation as when I composed them."

As previously intimated, he preserved his interest

in folk-music to the end. He was much impressed by Percy Grainger's phonographic records of such music and regretted that no one had done a similar work for Norway. On August 11, 1907, he wrote to Grainger (this was one of his last letters):

"Dear Percy Grainger,

"Thanks for your post-card! But above all else thanks for the days you gave us! I had wanted so much to get to know you more nearly, both as an artist and as a man, as I had the feeling that we would understand each other. And so it turned out. You have become a dear young friend to me, who has made more rich for me the evening of my life. I have always found that they are mistaken who would divide the artist from the man; on the contrary, the two are indissolubly wedded one to the other. In the man can be found the parallels of all the artist's traits. (Yes, even the most minute.) Even your stubborn 'unnecessary' fifths (!) I could recognize again in my dear Percy Grainger! Not that I cherish the least doubt that they will sound well in your choral treatment.

"I have again immersed myself in your folk-song settings and I see more and more clearly how 'genial' they are. In them you have thrown a clear light upon how the English folk-song (to my mind so different to the Scotch and Irish) is worthy of the privilege of being lifted up into the 'niveau' of Art; thereby to create an independent English Music. The folk-songs will doubtless be able to form the basis for a national style, as they have done in other lands, those of the greatest musical culture not excepted. I am impressed by the earnestness and energy with which the English 'Folk-song Society' carries out its object. May it ever enjoy fresh increase of strength and enthusiasm to pursue its goal! And may you, in the midst of all your other rich activities (the most important

for you and your art) be able to afford time and strength for the inclusion of your personality in the endeavour!

"And herewith a hearty greeting, also to your Mother. Write soon!

"Your devoted,

"Edvard Grieg."

Folk-music symbolized life to Grieg. "How strange is life," he wrote to Röntgen; "like the folk-tunes of which one knows not whether they are conceived in major or in minor."

One of the best of his *obiter dicta* occurs in his essay on Mozart, where he refers to Fétis as "a typical critic who lies down like a wet dog on just the best places."

Another, from his long letter to me of September 24, 1900, may be cited: "Tempo should be in the blood. If it is not, you may be sure that the other intentions of the composer also will be bungled."

To the details already given concerning Grieg's love of his country a few may be added here. He was "hugely proud and happy over Norway's newly got flag," writes Percy Grainger. "He was always keen to see it flying from the Troldhaugen flagstaff, and one day, when for some reason it was down, he was quite depressed not to see it as usual."

In the letters to his Swiss friend printed in *Die*

*Musik*, Grieg comments on his countrymen. There was a time, he admits, when he, too, did not appreciate "the great contrast between Björnson's and Ibsen's conception of the Norwegian national character. Yet I should like to exclaim with Holberg: 'Gentlemen, you are both right!' In other words, Björnson and Ibsen complement each other in their views. The Norwegian people, especially the peasantry, has sharply contrasting qualities, and it is obvious that Björnson, the optimist, glorifies the people, whereas Ibsen, the pessimist, scourges it. The composer may fitly unite within himself these opposite views without seeming untrue." In another letter he says:

"Many Norwegians formerly believed, as I myself did, that Peer Gynt represents only an exceptional type. Unhappily it has been shown in the last years how shockingly true to life the poet sketched that national character. Ibsen exposed a dangerous side of our whole people mercilessly. For that reason it is that he stands in such bad odour in our country politically."

To the same friend he wrote under date of October 15, 1905:

"I am, as you are, a Republican, and have always been. At the present moment, however, to pro-

claim a republic in Norway would be a dangerous and short-sighted beginning. Our enemies wish us to do so and openly express this wish, — the best indication that we must be on our guard. First Sweden, then Russia, has much interest in seeing us a republic. Our friendly neighbours, especially England, to which country we probably — though we do not yet know it — owe our freedom, wish no republic at all. For the rest, Norway has a more liberal constitution than most republics: and the continual recurrence of presidential elections (considering the pugnacity of our people, who still possess many traces of barbarism) would lead to party contests of a dangerous kind. It is not yet certain that the popular vote may not make a republic necessary. The Storthing and the Government, both of which in large part, indeed principally, are composed of Republicans, have no belief or hope in it, which, in fact, is very significant.

"What do you think of our two great days, the 7th of June, when we separated from Sweden, and the 13th of August, when the popular vote demanded by Sweden turned out to be, instead of the hoped-for fiasco, a triumph for Norway? And also the Convention at Karlstad. This convention has an incalculable significance for all nations. They say

it is a political masterpiece. Very good. But it is before all else an ethical work. The fundamental conceptions of honour and patriotism hitherto prevailing will from now on have a transformation from which better men must emerge! Is it Utopia? Yet I believe in it most surely. That my Fatherland is summoned to take the lead in this fills me with pride and thanksgiving."

During a visit Grieg made to England in 1888 he was impressed by the religious teaching of Unitarianism, and during the remaining nineteen years of his life he remained in that belief. Regarding church and state he wrote, July 3, 1906:

"I am become a bad letter writer. Formerly letter writing, like composing, went quickly and easily. I moved like a fish in the water. Bodily suffering and the weight of years have changed all that. The blood flows heavily and slowly and the mind, unfortunately, moves in the same tempo. Excuse me for this, please! My interest in the great questions of life, happily, is as lively as it was in my youth. . . . I am entirely of the opinion that the church must be separated from the state, and that with us such a separation will be accomplished in the not distant future. Fortunately I believe that I can predict that the separation will not be violent,

as in France, but will come about of itself, without any lasting opposition. The great event happened with us last year like something natural, as a matter of course; and the dissolution of church from state will happen in the same way.

## CHAPTER XV

### Grieg and His Friend Beyer

WHILE this volume was being printed I wrote to Mrs. Grieg for some details regarding Grieg's last days and the removal of the ashes to the grotto. She referred me to his intimate friend, Frants Beyer, whose name occurs repeatedly in the foregoing pages. I wrote to him and found him not only willing but eager to help me make my book a satisfactory record of Grieg's career. To him I owe the following touching narrative:

"The summer of 1907 Grieg as usual spent at Troldhaugen. In the last days of July he enjoyed the great pleasure of having as his guests his old friend Julius Röntgen and his young friend Percy Grainger. He greatly appreciated the excellent playing of both these sympathetic pianists and composers and we all spent many happy hours together. Grieg was much refreshed by this company of good friends, and everything looked bright. A few days after the guests had left there was a reaction, Grieg

suffering from sleeplessness and difficulty of breathing. By order of his physician he was taken to the hospital at Bergen and after a few days he felt better. Then he wished to try if the splendid air at Voss would do him good, so he invited my wife and myself to go there with him, Mrs. Grieg, his sister and sister-in-law, for a short stay. He found he had made no mistake; he felt somewhat better and breathed with less difficulty. He also enjoyed very much the wonderful views of snow mountains, lakes, and woods. I tried to persuade him to remain there for some time, in the hope of making the improvement lasting. But no. He had to conduct in London in September, and with his usual energy and sense of duty he kept his plan to leave Bergen on the third of September. The return trip to Troldhaugen did not agree with him, although we always tried to keep the windows open to give him air. The following nights he had practically no sleep, and the difficulty of breathing increased.

"On the first of September my wife and I dined at the Griegs' and spent the day with them. The physician also was present. Grieg felt weaker, and it was pitiable to see him suffer. In the evening he had to write a letter, and he needed all his energy to complete it. The following day he was to leave

Troldhaugen, to get the steamer on Tuesday, the third, to Lordal, thence to drive to Christiania, on the way to London. I took a cabin for him aboard the ship. Monday afternoon I rowed to Troldhaugen and found Grieg very, very ill. So the carriage was ordered and Grieg, Mrs. Grieg, his sister, sister-in-law and I drove to the hotel Norge in Bergen, where he intended to stay till the time for his departure. Next morning (Tuesday) I went to see him there. He was still very ill, but did not give up his plan of leaving. When I called at the hotel again later in the day, he was not there any more, having been brought to the hospital by order of the doctor, the departure being prohibited.

"In the hospital I found him in bed. He looked worse than ever, and I felt very anxious. As he needed quiet, I soon left, at about seven o'clock in the evening. He was then very feeble, as I held his hand, and scarcely able to ask me to remember him to my wife. Though I felt anxious, I did not think that death was approaching. No, I supposed his collapse was a result of his sleeplessness, and hoped to find him better the next morning.

"Later in the evening he gradually grew worse. He got some medicine and tried to sleep, but failed. 'This night will be bad, like the last one,' he said.

Feeling weaker, he quietly said: 'So this is to be my death.' At about eleven he felt easier, raised his head, smiled happily, laid his cheek on the pillow and got the much-longed for sleep. A few hours later, at four o'clock on the morning of the fourth of September, he quietly expired without having awakened."

Concerning the depositing of the ashes in the grotto, Mr. Beyer writes:

"On Troldhaugen is a mountain wall facing westwards toward the fjord. Its summit is crowned with small birches and spruces. At the bottom the rocks are covered with a dense growth of ferns, bird-cherries, mountain ash, and birches enwreathing the place. Grieg had repeatedly spoken to me of this spot as his resting place, the last time only a few weeks before his death. 'Here it is,' he said as we slowly walked past. Mrs. Grieg fulfilled his desire, and after the plan of his cousin, the architect Schak Bull, had a grotto made, simple like Grieg himself.

"In accordance with the wishes of Mrs. Grieg, who was at that time visiting friends in Denmark, one evening in April, 1908, while the setting sun sent its rays into the grotto and a blackbird sobbed its soft tunes in the spruces above, I, in presence of

my wife and Mr. Bull, put the urn containing Grieg's ashes into the cave, and a stone was placed in front.

'So he did return to the bosom of his mother.'"

Frants Beyer was born in Bergen, like Grieg. He first met the great composer at Christiania, where he took some piano lessons of him. They had in common not only a devotion to music, but a love of nature and of Norway, and these feelings created a sympathy which ripened into lifelong friendship. The photograph herewith reproduced is taken, writes Mr. Beyer, "at the shore of my little property Næsset, situated quite near to Troldhaugen, from which it is separated only by a little bay, 300 to 400 yards broad, so that Grieg and I could call to each other when we wanted to take our rowing or walking trips. I built my house in 1884, Grieg his in 1885, and we have had happy times. We generally visited each other by boat."

Mr. Beyer's chief treasure is a collection of about two hundred letters written to him by his great friend. "It has been my intention," he writes, "later on to publish some of them with connecting text and comments by myself, and in this manner to try to give a picture of Grieg." He kindly allows

Grieg and Frants Beyer

me to print a few of these letters in advance of publication. They cover the years 1871 to 1907.

In one of the earliest, dated Christiania, April 18, 1872, he writes that he is finding out more and more that "Miss Smith is a nice, lovely girl." This Miss Smith subsequently became Mrs. Beyer. In the same letter Grieg suggests an excursion to the mountains where they could hear the Hardanger fiddle and the national harp, the "langeleik." "The national songs are just published," he says, and tells how, after some explanatory remarks, he played his wedding march to a society of graduates; "and will you believe me, I had tears in my eyes."

In October, 1883, Grieg spent a few happy days in Weimar, with Liszt and the many other eminent musicians assembled there. On returning to Leipsic he wrote to Mr. Beyer to tell him "how much one may learn in a few days," and how art improves us. "I was so thankful, and as happy as a child, and embraced mentally what is most dear to me, and then first of all you, dear Frants. John sent me a few days ago a very nice postal card, and I shall write to him to-day and tell him about Weimar; from him you will learn the details about those two days so rich in memories. I never felt more vividly than yesterday that you cannot part the man from

the artist; if the latter is successful it arouses the best there is in the man, the desire for what is great and true; this is always the case with each individual who strives honestly, but there are moments when you solemnly promise yourself to fight for your high ideals and renounce egoism. I am sure you know such moments; the resolution is sincere and true because it is voluntary and not forced on you as in church; in such moments you are hardly aware of the body but simply hover blissfully in space. You should have heard the 'Heart-Wounds' and 'The Last Spring' last night; they played the crescendos and pianissimos with a wondrous art such as one hardly dreams about, and their forte was like a whole world of sound — and how the Germans did enjoy it! Besides the applause of the audience I heard bravos from the orchestra at the best places, and from the box at my left (I was conducting on the stage) the grunting of Liszt — that well-known sound which you hear only when there is something he likes."

In February, 1884, after his string quartet had been remarkably well played in Rome and received with great enthusiasm, he wrote to his friend:

"It is incomprehensible how a man's inmost thoughts expressed in the Hardanger musical lan-

guage can find their way straight into Italian hearts. But this much I know, that I love Norway still more after this; not that I will *seek* for my art what is Norwegian, but I will seek for what is *grand*, and what is produced up there amid the grand surroundings."

A few weeks later he wrote about meeting Ibsen at a social gathering in Rome. "Nina sang a number of my songs, including nearly all of those which are settings of Ibsen's poems, and just think! after 'Margaret's Cradle Song' and especially after the 'Album Lines' and 'A Swan' had been sung, the ice melted and he came with tears in his eyes to the piano, pressed our hands, unable to speak, mumbling something about 'understanding.' I need not tell you that Nina on this occasion did not sing with less understanding than she always does."

The effect on Grieg of one of his London concerts is told in a letter dated May 4, 1888:

"Dear Frants,

"It is very difficult for me to tell you about yesterday. You cannot imagine how it was. When I stood there, conducting 'The Last Spring,' and it sounded as though all nature would embrace me there at home, yes, then I was indeed glad and proud to be a Norwegian. I really think that the English sympathy for my art must come from their sympathy for Norway, because I cannot otherwise explain

yesterday's ovations. . . . Is it not peculiar — in a strange country?

"Verily, art is a riddle. 'I really got more than I deserved,' that is certain. You may think that it is not like me to speak so much about these external matters instead of taking hold of the essential thing, the performance. But the impression of the reception of the music was too overwhelming, because it was so unexpected. . . . I only wish you could have heard 'The Last Spring'! I thought so much of you! There were passages in it that sounded so lovely they would have made you weep. I had given directions as to all details and all the players did their very best, so that the effect was overwhelming. There were crescendos and diminuendos, accents and flights, it was a song with harmonies in ethereal heights which, as you know, we musicians so often aspire to but so seldom reach."

An amusing — but to Grieg annoying — incident in a Paris concert hall is related in a letter dated December 14, 1889. It would perhaps not have occurred could Grieg have foreseen that it is possible to conduct an orchestra perfectly well without a bâton, as Wassily Safonoff has shown. "The effect of the concert was peculiar and grand in every way," he wrote to Beyer. "I was kindly received, but when the time came for conducting the orchestra no bâton was to be found — servants are idiots everywhere; so, after waiting a moment I left the conductor's platform. Finally the brute brought a stick about as long as myself, but fortunately as thin as a reed. I did what you too

would have done — with a furious mien, and in spite of vigorous protests on the part of the servant, I broke off a piece, threw the rest into a corner, and then returned to the platform and rapped attention for the 'Autumn' overture. This episode you will not find mentioned in any criticism, so you can have it as a piece of private information."

Grieg appears to have never been entirely happy except when at home. Of his devotion to his home and to his friend the following, dated Copenhagen, September 9, 1891, gives eloquent evidence:

"You console me in my mournful state of mind as you alone can do it, and thus you increase my longing for home. These winter months in foreign countries have made me feel that I am not young any more. I need the home to create in, and when I now leave it, it must either be to conduct music or to get a change of air or gather impressions. You speak of next winter so invitingly — well, we will talk about that matter. One thing is certain: I feel the need of being with you more and more when I am travelling. May there be many happy months in store for us with Nature. In that life, in that association, lies all that music, part of which is on paper, but not the best and largest part, I am

sorry to say; but that part which is inspired by this wonderful mixture of friendship and nature usually is good. It is different here in this strange country; the tones I find good one day I tear out of my heart the next because they are not genuine; my thoughts are bloodless like myself and I lose faith in myself. With these facts in view it helps little that Dr. Abraham writes that my music, say the 'Peer Gynt' suite, has been performed in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australia. Therefore into the mountains, into the mountains, the only place of healing is among them."

Even amid the scenic marvels of Southern France, in the Riviera, he cannot forget his Norwegian mountains. From Mentone he writes, on the second of April, 1893:

"Dear Frants,

"I see that Nina is writing to Marie and I cannot help following suit. We have had a fine trip to the mountains this afternoon, I can tell you. I say trip to the mountains even if Nina was dressed in blue silk and I came back with my shoes polished, as if I had been walking on the floor. But then everything is dry here, and there are paths and roads everywhere, which you cannot possibly get out of without falling into a private vineyard or over a precipice. In this way, the other day, we reached a height of 2000 feet, where there is a group of mountain huts which they call a village — St. Agnèse; it was erected in the Middle Ages as a protection

against the Saracens, and the place is so steep that we could not understand how we had got up there; however, there was a comfortable cattle path, better than in Norway, partly even paved. The view — well, that was magnificent, even when we had got up only half-way. It is of course the Mediterranean that gives the whole its grandeur; these wild mountain forms, these olive and pine woods framed by this ocean of leaves — it must be admitted that it was exceedingly beautiful; but the funny part of it is, when you see something like this, you will always say it is still more beautiful in Norway, and it is not I alone who am so ultra-Norwegian, it was the same way with Sinding. Both he and Dr. Abraham have left and we are alone. I am glad to say that my health is improving, as you well can understand on account of our mountain trips, but the dieting is severe and must be kept strictly. When going to the mountains we take a donkey along, that is, when we go as high as 2000 feet or higher. The highest point I have reached, and also the most beautiful, is Mont Berceau, which is 3339 feet high — what do you think of that? The Goldmountain[1] is quaking with envy; well, let it shiver, I shall shiver myself with rapture, if I live to look down again on the land of 'Canaan' from one of the heights on the west coast of Norway. If we can once more throw ourselves in the brush somewhere up there I shall absolutely not wish for anything more for my part, it repays and atones for all that one has not been able to attain, more than anything else in this world. Those few tunes that I have been trying to win from nature enchained are only as the soft crying of a babe compared with what must come later on, as sure as there will be Norwegians born in Norway.

"By the way, talking about tunes, the other day I attended a concert at Monte Carlo where the excellent orchestra played

[1] The Goldmountain, in Norwegian Guefjeldet, is one of the mountains near Bergen.

among other things the first 'Peer Gynt' suite. I had a seat in a box, and received ovations both from the orchestra and the audience, so I had to rise and bow my thanks, but God help me, it could not please me, as it was rather too much to stand hearing Aase's Death played as a two-step and Anitra's Dance as a quick waltz. The most remarkable thing about it is, however, that people can listen to this and digest it."

Copenhagen, March 23, 1907, is the date of the following letter:

"Dear Frants,

"I just began a letter to Julius [Röntgen] in this way: 'If I had a son, he should be named Frants Julius or — Julius Frants. Because you are both writing me such dear letters that I am becoming quite tender.' Yes, so it is. It is great to have friends when one is young, but indeed it is still more so when you are getting old. When we are young, friends are, like everything else, a matter of course. In the old days we knew what it means to have them. . . . Here it is brighter, lighter, more lively; I feel something is thawing in me. And people are touchingly kind to us. And how they have kept us in memory as artists! Yes, you cannot imagine in how many different ways this is showing itself. That our rooms are filled with flowers every day is only one of them."

If Grieg suffered much in the last years of his life from bodily tortures and the heartless carpings of critics, he was made happy, on the other hand, by the love of the people. The last letter to be quoted here gives a touching example of this. It was written at Berlin, on April 19, 1907, less than five months before his death.

"Dear Frants,

"Believe me I have been wishing you were with me, particularly here in Berlin, where it was best. The Philharmonic orchestra played exceedingly well; it is so thoroughly trained that when an order was given it could not be shaken. After the concert Mr. Weingartner entered, and I was glad to meet him. Then there came whole families, a mother with two sons, who, with tears in their eyes, told me about the happiness my music had brought into their home and that I could have no idea what I had done for them through many years. What was I to say? Tears were coming in my eyes, too. Well, that is the way. To-day came a postal card from Constantinople with thanks for the string quartet, which has been played exceedingly well by a Bohemian Quartet; and then a great number of letters, many of which are very touching. It is remarkable that I should live to see all this. I feel warmly thankful, and experience a desire to become a better person; I suppose it is because I am sixty-four years old; had I been younger it would hardly have had that effect. But now, on this occasion, I feel happy over my sixty-four years, although it is hard to think that all these fine feelings that are now pouring in on me must pass away so soon."

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FOR several decades before Grieg's death the number of his admirers was legion, yet before the appearance of the first edition of the present work, in 1906, there was no book in English (or even in German), to which they could go for information regarding his life, his personality, and his music. The French were somewhat more fortunate, for in 1892 Closson published his excellent brochure, "Edvard Grieg et la Musique Scandinave" (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher); even this, however, has only forty pages about Grieg. In 1903 there appeared, in Norwegian only, Schjelderup's "Edvard Grieg og hans Vaerker" (Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, Copenhagen). The substance of this, with much new material, was issued at Leipsic (1908), by C. F. Peters in a 201-page volume entitled "Edvard Grieg" by Gerhard Schjelderup and Walter Niemann. See also Niemann's "Die Musik Skandinaviens" (Leipsic: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1906). In Norwegian there are, besides Schjelderup's first volume, two books with accurate articles, one by Almar Grönwold, the other Salmonsen's Encyclopædia (article

by Holter). In Swedish there is Lindgren's "Norske Musikere." Henry Maubel (Maurice Belval) has an appreciative chapter in his "Préfaces pour des Musiciens" (Paris: Fischbacher). Sara Bull and Philip Hale contributed good biographic and critical articles to "Great Composers and their Works" (Boston: J. B. Millet Co., 1891). Mr. Hale informs me that were he to re-write his article now he would make it still more favourable. There are chapters on Grieg in Lawrence Gilman's "Phases of Modern Music";[1] Daniel Gregory Mason's "From Grieg to Brahms;" "Songs and Song-Writers" (Scribners) and "Fifty Grieg Songs" (Ditson) by the author of the present volume; G. T. Ferris's "Great German Composers" (New York, 1905); R. F. Sharp's "Makers of Music" (London: 1898); George Capellen's "Die Freiheit oder Unfreiheit der Töne und Intervalle" (Leipsic: C. F. Kahnt, 1904), contains a 26-page analysis of the first four issues of the "Lyrische Stücke." See also Eschmann's "Wegweiser durch die Klavierliteratur" (Leipsic: Gebrüder Hug & Co.). The second book in English was "Grieg," by E. Markham Lee (London: Geo. Bell & Sons, 80 pp.). There are also books on Grieg

[1] John Lane: The Bodley Head, London. New York: John Lane Company.

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number of magazine articles. "The Musician" (Boston: Oliver Ditson Co.) and "The Étude" (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser) had Grieg numbers in November, 1907.

Grieg himself supplied material for a sketch of his career which appeared in the "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik," 1897 (Nos. 26–30). See also his sketch: "My First Success," in the "Neue Musik Zeitung" (Stuttgart, Jahrgang 27); English version in the "Contemporary Review" (1905). The "Neue Musikzeitung" also has articles by Schjelderup and Arthur Laser in Jahrg. 28, No. 4. "Die Musik" (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler) contains several important articles: an obituary by Schjelderup in Jahr. VII, No. 1; a number of letters to a Swiss friend, in VII, 2; (English version in "The New Music Review," New York, 1908); an article on his unpublished Manuscripts by J. Röntgen, in VII, 5. See also "Bibliothèque Universelle" (Lausanne, September 1897 (an article by Monastier); Berliner Tageblatt, 1907, No. 178; "Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger" (April 4, 1907); "Leipziger Zeitung" (Sept. 5, 1907); "Die Hilfe" (Berlin: 1907, No. 37). Comments on Grieg's opus 23 to opus 38 by Kretzschmar may be found in the "Musikalisches Wochenblatt" (Leipsic: 1884, Nos. 42–43).

## CATALOGUE OF GRIEG'S COMPOSITIONS

### I. Pianoforte Pieces

#### (a) *For Two Hands*

Op. 1. Four Pieces for Piano.
" 3. Six Poetic Tone-Pictures.
" 6. Three Humoresques.
" 7. Sonata in E minor.
" 12. Lyric Pieces, Book I.
" 17. Twenty-five Northern Dances and Folk-Tunes.
" 19. Sketches of Norwegian Life.
" 24. Ballade in G Minor.
" 28. Four Album-Leaves.
" 29. Improvisations on Two Norwegian Folk-Tunes.
" 38. Lyric Pieces, Book II.
" 40. Holberg Suite (Original).
" 41. Six Songs Transcribed for Piano.
" 43. Lyric Pieces, Book III.
" 47. " " " IV.
" 52. Six Songs Transcribed for Piano.
" 54. Lyric Pieces, Book V.
" 57. " " " VI.
" 62. " " " VII.
" 65. " " " VIII.
" 66. Nineteen Norwegian Folk-Tunes.
" 68. Lyric Pieces, Book IX.
" 71. " " " X.
" 72. Norwegian Peasant Dances.
" 73. Moods.

*Without Opus Number:*

Funeral March (for Nordraak).

(b) *For Four Hands*

Op. 11. Concert Overture (In Autumn).
" 14. Two Symphonic Pieces.
" 35. Four Norwegian Dances.
" 37. Two Waltz-Caprices.
" 64. Symphonic Dances.

(c) *For Two Pianos, Four Hands*

Op. 51. Romance with Variations.
Second Piano Part to Four Mozart Sonatas.

(d) *Piano with Orchestra*

Op. 16. Concerto in A Minor.
(Also arranged for two pianos.)

## II. Orchestral Works

(a) *Full Orchestra*

Op. 11. Concert Overture (In Autumn).
" 46. Peer Gynt Suite, I.
(1. "Morning Mood." 2. "Aase's Death." 3. "Anitra's Dance." 4. "In the Hall of the Mountain King.")
55. Peer Gynt Suite, II.
(1. "Abduction of the Bride." "Ingrid's Lament." 2. "Arabian Dance." 3. "Peer Gynt's Home-coming." 4. "Solvejg's Song.")
" 56. Three Numbers from "Sigurd Jorsalfar."
(1. Overture [In the King's Hall]. 2. Intermezzo [Borghild's Dream]. 3. Triumphal March.)
" 51. Romance with Variations (Arrangement).
" 68. Lyric Pieces.

(b) *String Orchestra*

Op. 34. Two Elegiac Melodies after Norwegian Poems by A. O. Vinje.
(1. "Heart-Wounds." 2. "The Last Spring.")

" 40. Holberg Suite.
(1. Prelude. 2. Sarabande. 3. Gavotte. 4. Air. 5. Rigaudon.) From the original for piano for two hands.

" 53. Two Original Songs, Orchestrated.
(1. "Norwegian." 2. "The First Meeting.")

" 63. Two Norwegian Melodies.
(1. In the Popular Style. 2. Cow-Keeper's Tune.)

III. Chamber Music

Op. 8. First Sonata for Violin and Piano, in F Major.

" 13. Second Sonata for Violin and Piano, in G Major.

" 27. String Quartet, in G Minor.

" 45. Third Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Minor.

" 36. Sonata for Violoncello and Piano in A Minor.

IV. Declamation with Orchestra

Op. 42. "Bergliot" (Melodrama, poem by Björnson).

V. Vocal Works

(a) *For Chorus with Orchestra*

Op. 20. "Before the Cloister Gate," for Solo Voices and Woman's Chorus.

" 22. Two Songs from "Sigurd Jorsalfar," for Solo Voice and Men's Chorus.
(1. "The Norse People." 2. "King's Song.")

" 31. "Landsighting," for Baritone Solo and Men's Chorus (with Organ *ad libitum*).

" 50. "Olaf Trygvason," for three Solo Voices and Mixed Chorus.

(b) *Choruses without Accompaniment*

Op. 30. Album for Male Voices.
" 74. Four Psalms for Mixed Chorus.

(c) *Solo Voice with Orchestra*

Op. 32. "Alone" ("Der Einsame," or "Der Bergentrückte") for Baritone Solo, String Orchestra, and two Horns.

Six Songs for Concert Performance, with Orchestral Accompaniment.

(1. "Solvejg's Songs." 2. "Solvejg's Cradle Song." 3. "From Monte Pincio." 4. "A Swan." 5. "Spring." 6. "Henrik Wergeland."

(d) *Songs with Piano Accompaniment*

Op. 2. Four Songs for Alto.
" 4. Six Songs (in Peters Albums, II. and V.).
" 5. Four Songs (in Peters Albums II. and III.).
" 9. Four Songs and Ballads (in Peters Albums, I. and V.).
" 10. Four Songs.
" 15. Four Songs (in Peters Albums, I., II., and V.).
" 18. Eight Songs (in Peters Albums, I., II., and V.).
" 21. Four Songs (in Peters Albums, I., and II.).
" 23. Three Songs from "Peer Gynt."
(1. "Solvejg's Song." 2. "Solvejg's Cradle-Song." 3. "Peer Gynt's Serenade.") (In Peters Albums, III. and V., except the Serenade, which is published by Hansen in Copenhagen.)
" 25. Five Songs (in Peters Album, III.).
" 26. Four Songs (in Peters Album, III.).
" 33. Twelve Songs (in Peters Album, IV.).
" 39. Five Songs (in Peters Album, V.).
" 44. Four Songs, "From Fjeld and Fjord."

Op. 48. Six Songs (to German Words).
" 49. Six Songs.
" 58. Five Songs.
" 59. Six Songs.
" 60. Five Songs.
" 61. Seven Children's Songs.
" 67. The Mountain Maid (Cycle of Eight Songs).
" 69. Five Songs.
" 70. Five Songs.

*Without Opus Number*

"The Odalisque."
"The Princess."
"Ave Maria Stella" (Hansen. Copenhagen).[1]

[1] The foregoing list of Grieg's works was made by Arthur Laser for the German version of the first edition of this biography. It is more complete than that in the Grieg Catalogue of Peters, which does not cover the works that appeared after 1898. For lists of the numerous arrangements of his works, partly by himself, partly by others, the reader must be referred to the catalogues of Peters, Hansen, Rieter-Biedermann, and Otto Forberg.

# INDEX


Abraham, Dr., 140, 151, 301.
"Alone," xxviii, 251.
America, music reprinted in, x; concert tours, xi, invitations to come to, 155, 156.
"Autumn, In the," overture, 185.

Bach, 215, 283.
Bagpipe, 122.
"Ballade," 89, 206.
Bargiel, W., 225.
"Bell-Ringing," 192, 210.
"Bergentrückte," Der, xxviii, 251.
"Bergliot," 183.
Beyer, Frants, 92, 94, 95, 215, chapter XV.
Björnson, xxvi, 71, 118, 144, 181, 202, 252, 254, 258, 286.
Blackburne, Vernon, 123.
Brahms, xvii, 140, 207, 231, 238, 281.
Breithaupt, R., 167, 260.
Brodsky, A., 112, 160.
Bülow, Hans von, 137, 205.
Bull, Ole, 12–18, 33–37, 68, 85.
Bull, Sara, 15, 34, 68.

Capellen, G., 96, 138, 214.
Century Magazine, x, 277–9.
Chamber music, 193–203.
Chopin, 10, 21, 24, 84, 141, 233, 246, 282.
"Cloister Gate," at the, 88, 247.
Closson, E., 89, 196, 248, 255.
Coerne, L. A., 168.
Colonne, E., xxxxv, 89, 103–108.
Concerto, see piano.
Critics and Criticism, x, xvi, xxii, xxvi, xxx, xxxiii, 103, 120, 126, 128, 133, 136, 199, 200, 213, 214, 219, 225, 245, 259, 260, 285.

D'Albert, Eugen, 137.
Debussy, C., 124, 215, 224.
Dissonances, 215, 216, 217, 240.
Ditson, O., Co., xviii, 260.
Dreyfus episode, 103–108.
Dvořák, 140, 199, 282.

"Elegiac Melodies," for orchestra, 188.
Elson, L. C., xxxiv.
Engel, C., 124.
England, Grieg in, 98–103, 113, 149, 153, 154, 158, 240; chap. XV, folk-music, 284.

Fauré, G., 103.
Folk-music, Norwegian, xxx, xxxi, 71, 94, 117–143, 213, 284, 285.

France, Grieg in, 103–108.
Franz, R., xii.
Funeral March (Nordraak), 40, 161, 164.

Gade, 28, 36, 39.
Germany, Grieg in, 152.
Gilman, L., 196.
Goepp, Ph., 131.
Grainger, Percy, 157, 206, 267, 284, 285.
Grieg, Edvard, letters to the author, ix–xxxi; autobiographic sketch, xiii–xv, xxi; ill health, xii, xxi, xxx, 26, 148–9; writes good German, xv; loyalty to publishers, xix; modesty, xxi, xxvii, xxxi; politics, xxx; his healthy music, xxxiv; faith in future, xxvi; ancestry and childhood, 1–18; his name, 3; love of harmony, 8; dislikes practising, 9; opus 1, 10; at Leipsic Conservatory, 19–31; loses use of one lung, 26; first performance of his music, 27; intercourse with Gade, 28; influenced by Ole Bull, 33; by Nordraak, 36; founds Euterpe Society, 38; activity in Christiania, 42; marriage, 43; works conducted by, 44; meets Liszt, 47; aid from Government, 48; friendship with Svendsen, 57; gets a stipend, 59; writes "Peer Gynt," 59; lives at Lofthus; wants no listeners, 69; fond of fishing, 70; his "tune house," 71; at home in Troldhaugen, 73–80; personal appearance, 75; attached to home, 76; at table, 79; on Bayreuth, 79; fond of good eating, 82; a Republican, 84; liked by royalty, 84; fond of children, 87; as a pianist, 88, 100, 102, 109–111; as a conductor, 89, 98–109; nervous at concerts, 89, 90; appearance, 90; Tchaikovsky on, 91, 111; anecdote, 92; indifference to badges, 92; proud of academic honours, 92; gets English degrees, 93; popular in England, 93, 102, 291, 297; jokes about Legion of Honour, 93; listens to folk-music, 94; tunes "fresh from the cow," 95; in the mountain wilderness, 95; lack of diplomatic tact, 95; instructs orchestral players, 98; five visits to England, 98; popular in France, 103; Dreyfus incident, 103–108; a Paris programme, 107; popular in Sweden, 111; song recitals with his wife, 112–114; Tchaikovsky moved to tears, 114; relation to Norwegian national music, 125; enlarged the world-language of music, 127; his originality, xxxi, 128, 131–133, 212; his imitators, 132; how re-

garded by professionals, 134–143; his aristocratic folk-music, 139; his popularity, 141; Norwegian sap, 142; last years, 144–159; sixtieth birthday, 144; and the Kaiser, 144, 148, 164; why continued to give concerts, 149; good humour at accident, 151; popularity in Berlin, 152; asked to write coronation march, 153; love of beautiful women, 153; "mannerism" and personality, 154; popularity in London, 154; his earnings, 155, 156; horror of seasickness, 156; likes oysters, 156; rowing and walking, 157; death, 159; beloved, 159; funeral, 160–164; tomb, 165; as orchestrator, 166; and Seidl, 190; healthy mind, 211; Norwegianism, 212; "mannerisms," 214; on harmony, 214; his "teachers," 215; individuality, 217; form, 229–232; a genius, 235; his rank, 225–245; "too popular," 240; gave life blood in his songs, 246; comic songs, 250; operatic plans, 252, 255; why wrote chiefly short pieces, 255; a sensitive plant, 258; best fifty songs, 261; posthumous songs, 268; variety of moods, 269; artistic creed, 271; his virtues, 271; pleasure of creating, 283; patriotism, 285; Norwegian politics and characteristics, 286–287.
Grieg, John, 33.
Grieg, Nina, 41, 74, 96, 101, 111–115.
Grove, Sir George, 98.

Hadow, W. H., 129, 236.
Hale, P., 256, 305.
Halling dance, 118.
Halvorsen, J., 65, 161, 192, 256.
Hammerik, A., 269.
Hansen, W., 267.
Hanslick, E., 110, 170, 187, 199.
Harmony, 8, 215 (see Dissonances).
Haydn and folk-music, 129.
Hartmann, J. P. E., 272.
Hinrichsen, 144, 147.
"Holberg Suite," 167, 186, 228.
Humorous part songs, 250.
Huneker, J., xxxiv.

Ibsen, 59–66, 114, 255, 286.
"I Love Thee," 41, 88, 261.

Judge, Anna G., 248.
Jumboism, 233.

Kaiser Wilhelm, 144–148, 164.
Keeton, E. A., 183.
Kjerulf, 43.
Kneisel Quartet, 202.
Krehbiel, H. E., 185.

"Landsighting," 249.
Lane, J, xx, xxvii.

Laser, A., xxxi, xxxv, 269, 312.
Lee, E. M., 157, 233.
Lehmann, Lilli, 138, 266.
Liebling, Leonard, 141.
Liszt, xii, xxiii, 47–57, 82, 85, 121, 135, 219, 232, 247, 296.
Loomis, H. W., 218.
Lucas, C., 231.
"Lyric Suite," 190.

MacDowell, E., xxx, 77, 78, 137, 231, 252.
Maitland, Fuller, 228.
Male Choir, Album for, 250.
Mason, D. G., 258.
Mason, W., 138, 208.
Mathews, W. S. B., 206, 218.
Maubel, H., 184.
Mendelssohn, 242.
Messchaert, 283.
Meyer, Oscar, 93, 150, 152, 153, 266.
Monastier-Schroeder, Rev., 153, 175, 186, 269, 284.
"Monte Pincio," 189, 265.
"Mountain Maid," the, 266.
Mozart, x, 35, 214, 215, 219, 229, 234, 279, 283.

Newman, E., 231.
Niecks, F., 193, 205, 230, 236.
Niemann, W., 173, 183, 207.
Nikisch, A., 243.
Nordraak, 31, 33, 36, 40, 161, 164.
Norwegian geniuses, 60; characteristics, 286; politics, 286–287.
Norwegian music, see Folk-music.

"Olaf Trygvason," 252.
"Old Norwegian Romance," 189.
Operatic fragment and plans, 252.
Oratorio, 258.
Orchestral works, 138, 166–193.
Oscar, King, 116.

Paderewski, I. J., 137, 282.
Part Songs, 250.
Paris, Grieg in, 103–108.
"Peer Gynt," 59–66, 103, 145, 167, 168–180, 243, 286.
Peters, C. F., xxxv, 166, 179, 181, 188, 207, 218.
Peters, Wm., xxxv, 69–72.
Pianist, Grieg as, 88, 100, 102, 109–111.
Piano, works for: concerto, 44, 55–57, 85, 100, 204–206; "Ballade," 206; short pieces, 207–224; sonata, 229.
Programmes, Grieg's, 107, 109.
Prout, E., 167.
Psalms, Four, 257.
Pugno, R., 138, 205,

Quartets, 198–203.

"Recognition of Land," 249.
Reinhard, J., xxxv, 112, 142.
Renaud, M., 221.
Richter, Hans, 80.
Riemann, H., 225, 259.
Röntgen, Julius, xxxv, 93, 94, 103, 107, 179, 188, 192, 200, 201, 202, 203, 214, 220, 237, 240, 258, 281, 285.

Saint-Saëns, C., 140, 167, 236.
Scandinavian music, 30, 32. (See Folk-music.)
Schjelderup, G., xxii, 5, 108, 195, 205, 239, 254, 266.
Schjelderup and Niemann, xxxv, 5, 251.
Schjött, 91.
Schmid, O., 4, 27.
Schmidt, L., 226, 242.
Schubert, xii, 259.
Schumann, xii, 21, 24, 30, 84, 126, 229, 277–279.
Scribner, C., ix.
Seidl, Anton, xviii, 190, 278.
Sgambati, 54.
"Sigurd Jorsalfar," 147, 180–183.
Sinding, 271.
"Solvejg's Cradle Song," 170, 174, 189.
Solvejg's Lied," 133, 174.
Sonatas, for violin and piano, 36, 39, 49, 195–197; 'cello and piano, 197; piano solo, 229.
Songs, Grieg's, best fifty, xviii; ignored, xxxiii; comment on, 258–270.
Song writers, book on, ix, 215.
Springdans, 118.
Strauss, R., 215, 283.
Sullivan, Arthur, 24, 281.
Svendsen, 57.
"Swan, The," 189, 261.
Swedish popular airs, 116.

Tchaikovsky, 114, 135, 282.
Tempo, 285.
Thomas, Theodore, 138.
Troldhaugen, 73, 76, 80.
"Two Melodies for String Orchestra," 189.
"Two Norse Melodies," 189.

Van der Stucken, xxxv, 81–89, 256.
Venth, Carl, xxxv, 90, 122.
Verdi, G., 273–277.
Victoria, Queen, 113, 114.
Vinje, A. O., 263.
Vocal compositions, 246–270.

Wagner, x, xiii, xiv, xxv, 35, 84, 215, 261, 273, 278, 280.
Weingartner, 244.
Wolff, J., 138.

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